HENRY MELVILL

(1798-1871)

A STUDY OF HIS THEOLOGICAL THOUGHT

AND

HOMILETICAL METHOD

BY

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

PREFACE

Studying a great preacher of Christ is always a humbling experience. Henry Melvill's ministry has furnished the basis for such an adventure of faith. In suggesting Melvill as a possible subject for research, Principal Hugh Watt opened the door into a life and work which has proved to be a source of inspiration. For the Principal's wise and sympathetic counsel, I am deeply grateful. Also Professor W. S. Tindal, who through his kind and helpful supervision, has been of immeasurable assistance during the writing of this thesis. To these two men especially, I wish to express my thanks.

The attempt has been made to follow the British spelling; however, it is very probable that some Americanisms which peculiarly use or abuse the King's English may have slipped into this work. It is hoped that the British reader may forgive such usage if and when it occurs.

This study would have been an impossible task without my wife's encouragement during every step of the way.

R. C. Young

Balerno, Midlothian

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Some scars still remain of the destruction which the "blitz" of London left in its wake. Although the rubble has been cleared away and pockmarked buildings have had their faces lifted by a fresh coat of paint, the visitor to London, stirred by curiosity to see the lingering effects of the war, cannot fail to be impressed by the number of ruined churches which still stand as reminders of the Battle of Britain. As people scurry by these forlorn shells, bent upon the humdrum tasks of living, few seem to lament their utter uselessness as places of worship and inspiration. They stand des-erted and alone. They have become just another familiar landmark, viewed with no more feeling than the statue of some obscure Victorian poet.

Camden Church, on the north side of Peckham Road in Camberwell, today stands almost lost behind an unkempt hedge. What was once a well tended lawn is now a tangle of weeds and watergrass, littered with tin cans, mortar and stones. The heavy lock is opened once a week for half a dozen worshippers who meet in the musty vestry on Sunday morning. To reach the vestry they must pass through the sanctuary taking care not to brush against the pews which are covered with the accumulated filth and rubble of eight years' disuse. Walking down the narrow side

aisle, one must be careful not to stumble over the rusty trays which have been hopefully placed in the aisle to catch the water dripping through the rotted roof. On entering, one cannot fail to be depressed at the sight of the roofless chancel which was destroyed by a landmine that fell in 1941 a few days after Easter. The chancel floor is covered with plaster, broken glass and with the dung of the pidgeons that now inhabit the exposed nooks and crannies above. A tarnished bronze plaque would never be noticed unless pointed out to the visitor. It marks the place where once was a stained glass window given in memory of Henry Melvill, minister of Camden Chapel from 1829 to 1844. One hundred years have also tarnished his memory, for few churchmen or theologians know of the reputation which Melvill enjoyed for nearly half a century as a leader in the religious life of England.

A favourite comment of Melvill's contemporaries on his preaching was that his sermons were preached for eternity, to be "coenduring with the world itself."[1] The pivot of this thesis is an analysis of Melvill's theological thought and homiletical method. If what he had to say to his generation was a mere tissue of elegant

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[1] J. Grant, Metropolitan Pulpit, Vol. II, p. 4. The same thought is expressed in Hogg's Instructor, Vol. VI, p. 287; The Preacher's Lantern, p. 14, and Melvill's sermons themselves indicate he felt that his preaching had not only temporal but eternal significance.

words which cast a spell over his congregations, then this study will prove to be a pointless academic exercise; an attempt to polish up a memorial of Melvill which might as well be left tarnished beyond recognition. If, on the other hand, Melvill's message, although long neglected and almost forgotten, has an eternal value, this study may help to reveal the secret of his power and success.

Henry Melvill was solely a preacher, a man of modest and retiring habits, one whose life was so subordinated to his message that no biography was ever attempted; for as Davies suggests, "His life, though so honoured and so useful, did not furnish enough incident to justify one."[1] Most writers have either passed over his life with a scant outline of important dates and brief mention of his accomplishments, or they have ignored his life completely. One chapter of this study tries to give a more detailed picture of the preacher as a man. I am keenly aware of the phases of his life on which little light is shed; it has often been necessary to put an interpretation upon mere fragments of biography. None of his correspondence has been preserved. Of his nine children, four sons who went into the Indian Civil Service and a daughter who married an officer in the Bengal Service, all lived and died in the Far East. Of the four remaining daughters, nothing

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[1] G.J. Davies, Successful Preachers, p. 43.

is known.

The Dean's verger at St. Paul's Cathedral has written, after a search through the records there, "I have to confess with regrets my inability to discover anything of interest about the late Canon Melvill. He happened to be in one of those periods when little was recorded of the Cathedral canons. Much more is known of his predecessors and his successors, but little of his generation."[1] In conversation, h e later added that in his opinion, Mr. Melvill, although a great preacher, would be a particularly difficult subject for inquiry.

Why then select Henry Melvill as a subject of research? Is it flogging a dead horse? However obscure Melvill may have been as a man, as a preacher he shines brightly in a period of English history which boasted some of the finest preaching of any age. A. J. Gossip has written, "If history is any guide, if you are to win back the world for God, it will far likeliest be through preaching. Always it is the preacher, the prophet, who fires men's souls, and brings in a new era."[2] Melvill was one who helped to send a vivifying wind over the valley of dry bones which choked the theology and churchmanship of the Anglican Communion of the early nineteenth century. . The great revival of religion which Wesley and Whitfield

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[1] Exerpt from a letter written by H. V. Ireson, January 20, 1948.

[2] In Christ's Stead, p. 55.

had sown broadcast throughout the land was consolidated in the Evangelical Revival. Venn, Berridge, Romaine, Newton, Cecil, Simeon and others had awakened and nurtured a new spirit in the Church of England. After 1833, the Evangelical Party slumped, and the Oxford Movement or the High Church Party was riding the crest of the wave of leadership,[1] but Melvill, often called "the Evangelical Chrysostom"[2] or the "modern Jeremy Taylor"[3], faithfully conducted an evangelical ministry at a time when his church was suffering in labour, giving birth to the Tractarian Movement. Melvill did not stand aloof in this struggle; his impact upon his times is dealt with in a later chapter. His outspoken criticisms of the Church of Rome are impregnated with keen analysis of the basic issues at stake in the Protestant-Romanist controversy, and his thought on this subject is arresting, and relevant to the doctrinal questions that are and must be considered today.

When one leaves the consideration of Melvill as a man and his impact on his times, and wades into the volumes of his published sermons, he soon realizes that the chief problem in studying Melvill's thought is one of mass. The massiveness of his mind and the abundance of his writing make it hard to know where to begin. Like an analysis of

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[1] F. W. Cornish, A History of the English Church in the Nineteenth Century, Vol. I, p. 32.

[2] Ibid., p. 31.

[3] H. Christmas, Preachers and Preaching, p. 102.

the Bible, the study of Melvill can go on and on, with every shade of opinion and every development of his thought having a right to be heard. The scope of his theology is, as might be expected, wide because he was a preacher steeped in the Bible from Genesis to Revelation. Although he was well acquainted with the systems of philosophy, both sacred and secular, these are not the source of his strength; his power in the pulpit stemmed primarily from his knowledge of the Bible. His sermons are those of an expositor who at times exhibited a flair for developing unusual texts such as, "Ephraim is a cake not turned." (Hosea 7:8) Two volumes of his sermons entitled, Sermons on Certain of the Less Prominent Facts and References in Sacred Story, display his skill in developing the significance of paths seldom trodden in Holy Scriptures. Although his choice of texts occasionally borders on the spectacular, his reasoning and discussion dispel any notions that his choice of an unusual text is merely for the sake of ostentation.

As Melvill's published sermons contain on an average seven thousand words and took an hour to preach, the problem of mass gives rise to the problem of judgment. A study of his thought does not lead to any startling "new finds", but it is hoped that this study will reveal the cogency of his biblical theology.

As a preacher, Melvill is a paradox. He broke many of the rules of homiletics recognized today, yet when he preached

a century ago, the church was invariably packed to the doors with an expectant congregation. How did his homiletical method contribute to his popularity? Why did scores of imitators attempt to model their preaching on his and what were the consequences? How did he adapt his method of approach to meet the peculiar needs of different types of congregations? What can be learned from the structure and the literary style of his sermons?

In the study of any man's preaching method, one must be aware of the temptation to produce either a sentimental encomium or a pedantic, intellectual apologetic. In almost all branches of research, the last forty years have witnessed a revolt against a priori reasoning and a return to realism; "Let the facts themselves furnish the basis for study," and in studying Melvill as a preacher, let his sermons themselves furnisn the basis for study. Whereas the strict rationalist held that there was one uniform method of approach for every problem, the modern realist maintains that the peculiarity of the subject matter must determine the approach and the method of research. This thesis attempts a realistic approach to Melvill's preaching, seeking to relate the kerygma which he proclaimed to his homiletical method. The study will be justified only if this method of analysis succeeds.

The concluding chapter is an estimate of Henry Melvill as a preacher. This study began and ended with the strong

conviction that the prophetic voice of the evangelical preacher must be more clearly heard above the babble of secular voices; in Henry Melvill, I believe we find some qualities of thought and of preaching method which have earned the right to be considered today, and that his is the voice of one "who being dead yet speaketh."

CHAPTER II

BIOGRAPHICAL

Section I

Family Background

Much of the world's great preaching has its roots in Scotland. Henry Melvill's father was born April 7th, 1762 in Dunbar to a "prosperous, respectable, and well-connected father" and his "prudent and pious wife."[1] In this once flourishing seaport town situated on the Firth of Forth, Philip Melvill lived until, attracted by "the outward show of respect, ambition to command, and the gaudy pomp of military life," he left Scotland at the age of sixteen for a career in the army;[2] and with his father's help secured a commission in the 73rd Regiment, commanded by Lord Macleod. Lieut. Melvill's Highland regiment left the country in March 1779 and arrived in India in time for the battle of Perambancum with the forces of Hyder Ali in the Mysore Campaign,[3] where the young officer received twenty-seven wounds[4] and was held prisoner four years. His left arm was shattered during the engagement and the muscles of his right arm were severed by a sabre cut after the surender. His reaction to the suffering is recorded in his

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1 Brief Memoir of Philip Melvill, Esq., p. 3; hereafter cited as Memoir.

2 Ibid., p. 59.

3 E. Thornton, The History of the British Empire in India, Vol. II, p. 235.

4 Memoir, op. cit., pp. 45-46.

Memoirs, "All medicine was denied. . . and while our bodies were racked with pain and engulfed with sickness, our minds became a prey to gloom and despondency."[1]

After his return to London at the age of twenty-four, all prospects of "military renown, high rank, and future glory which had inflated his breast seven years before" were blasted. His army service had left him so crippled that he would always need assistance in "cutting his meat and dressing,"[2] but much to his surprise, the Secretary of War, after reviewing his record, immediately procured him a Captaincy and the command of an invalid company stationed in Guernsey. It was during his tour of duty on this island that he met and in 1787 married Elizabeth Carey Dobree,[3] whose family, about 1572, had left their property in Normandy, (where they had been Counts and Peers of France from the reign of Louis XI) in consequence of the Edict of Nantes. In Guernsey, where they took refuge, they were free to follow the tenets of the Protestant faith under British rule.[4]

His life with Elizabeth was quiet, happy and fruitful. Military duties were light, and as husband and wife they joined in establishing a household of Christian faith and reared a family. The moral conduct as well as the military discipline of his company was a chief concern of

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1 Ibid., p. 49.

2 Ibid., p. 59.

3 G. C. Boase, Collectanea Cornubiensia.

4 E. J. Joubert de La Ferte, The Melvill Family, p. 6.

the Captain and he provided a school for the soldiers' children who came to his house every Sunday evening for religious instruction, and were catechized by Captain Melvill "with such assistance as his family afforded."[1]

Their happy life on Guernsey might have continued for longer than five years had not the outbreak of the French Revolution placed their peaceful island in a strategic and dangerously exposed position. His command so near the French coast, greatly increased the military duties of the Captain, with the result that fatigue, coupled with his infirmity, forced him to apply for transfer to England.[2]

With their boys, Peter, James and John, the Melvills left Guernsey in 1793 and settled in Topsham in the county of Devon. The strain of Captain Melvill's recent service left him unable to cope with the demands of active army duty; but in retirement he had the leisure to read, and gather materials for the education of his children. His Memoir reveals that after wide reading in the fields of "natural history, astronomy, geography, etc., he composed a little treatise "On the Existence of God," in question and answer form as fit matter for conversation with his children."[3]

During this period of convalescence, Philip Melvill's

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[1] Memoir, op. cit., pp. 65-66.

[2] Ibid., p. 67.

[3] Ibid., p. 68

views of salvation underwent a gradual change; his exalted view of human nature was altered by his reading, especially the poems of Cowper, and he arrived at the conception of regenerate man as the recipient of "free, sovereign, unmerited grace."

After four years of retirement, Melvill's health was sufficiently improved for him to request active duty; and on June 29th, 1797, he was named Lieutenant Governor of Pendennis Castle, where an invalid company was billeted along with a regiment of militia.[1] The Melvills arrived there with the family, which now included in addition to the three boys, Jean and Philip, born during the period of Captain Melvill's retirement. At their new post, Melvill found "habitual drunkenness, swearing, profanation of the Sabbath" along with the concomitant consequences of military personnel undisciplined and idle.[2] The manner in which the new commanding officer resolved a delicate situation would be worth describing in detail, but since the method of solving personnel problems does not fall within the scope of this thesis, it can only be said in passing, that he not only enforced good order, but exemplified it. "While the name of Christ was on his tongue, he had the example of Christ on his heart, and showed in his life, such lovely

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1 Ibid., p. 69.

2 Ibid., p. 72.

combinations of humility and high-spiritedness, indulgence and integrity, benevolence of heart and uprightness of conduct, as won the respect and esteem of those under his command."[1] His moral and spiritual influence which he exerted on the lives of the soldiers and their families was admirable. Beside a regular church service held on the station, each Sunday evening the Melvill home was opened and the soldiers were welcomed to the family devotions which consisted of a service of worship and the reading of a sermon. Through the Naval and Military Bible Society, he was able to secure Bibles for each barrack-room and cottage, guard-house and hospital. Philip Melvill carried a "praying heart" into every sphere of his activity.

Henry Melvill was the sixth child, of their family of nine. He was born on September 14, 1798, the year in which Lord Nelson was engaging the French fleet in the Mediterranean and the coastal towns of Britain were forming voluntary defense organizations against a threatened invasion.

The Brief Memoir of Philip Melvill, Esq. furnishes scant material for Henry's early life. If modern psychologists are correct in holding that a child's fundamental qualities of character are determined prior to the age of seven, Henry's ministry can perhaps be better understood in the light of his father's developing spiritual life.

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[1] Ibid., pp. 75-76.

At about the time of Henry's birth he wrote, "As long as the present war last, it is my duty to exert myself more and more in my military capacity, reserving for myself the hope of retiring from the service if the Lord should send peace, and of devoting my remaining years to His more immediate service, in connection with the training up my children in the nurture and admonition of the Lord."[1]

The first decade of the nineteenth century saw the peril of a French invasion grow less, and a period of peace followed. For the Melvills, the turn of the century brought changes in the family fortunes.[2] In 1801, Peter Melvill, the ten year old son, died. Captain Melvill's health collapsed during the winter of 1804 and made necessary a year's leave of absence. Shortly after his return to duty, a change in the administration of the invalid companies relieved him of his command and he was retired as a Captain receiving full pay.[3] In November of 1806, pneumonia nearly took his life but he recovered and enjoyed good health for a time. While worshipping at church on Sunday morning in August 1808, the news reached him that his eldest son, John, a lieutenant in the Royal Artillery serving in India, had been drowned while boating in Sunderland Harbour. Two years later, the Melvill family left

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1. Ibid., p.74.
2. Boase, op. cit., gives 1803 as the date of his death.
3. Ibid., The salary reported as £ 86:3:9.

their castle home on the south coast of England for residence in London where they took a house in Islington, and it was in this metropolitan community that Henry Melvill lived and laboured for most of the next sixty years. They had been in London only one year when unfinished business at Pendennis Castle required Captain Melvill's presence. A few days before his scheduled return to London, he was "seized with a nervous fever."[1] Mrs. Melvill, leaving the seven children in London, joined her husband and remained at his bedside until his death at the age of forty-nine, on October 27th, 1811.[2]

Soldiers and civilians alike grieved the loss of Captain Melvill; The Royal Cornwall Gazette of November 2nd, 1811, commented, "As Lieutenant-Governor of Pendennis Castle, he exhibited a conduct and character which endeared him to all who knew him. Devotion to his God was his ruling principle; whatever he was about, this sentiment was predominant."[3] The Rev. John Wilcox concluding the funeral sermon said, "As a father, his children will never see his equal. Should they ever become parents, may they remember who and what their father was."[4]

Henry Melvill was thirteen years old at the time of his father's death. It is unfortunate that almost complete

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1 Memoir, op. cit., p. 96.

2 Ibid., p. 123.

3 Joubert de La Ferte, op. cit., p. 6.

4 The True Christian Exemplified; A funeral sermon preached in Ely Chapel, Holburn, London on Sunday, Nov. 24th, 1811.

silence shrouds this period of the Melvill home and family life. A writer in an early issue of The Church Magazine commented, "The family, deprived of its chief support and inspiration by the death of its father, was debarred from many literary advantages which greater affluence would have commanded."[1] E. M. Roose in Ecclesiastica wrote, ". . . the subject of the following memoir (i. e., Henry Melvill) would form an interesting chapter in another work, on the pursuit of knowledge under difficulties."[2]

The meagre details available about this period immediately following Captain Melvill's death give only a hint of the family's circumstances. Many questions must remain unanswered. However, a young widow left with but "slender-means"[3] and five of her seven children unprovided for, would certainly need ingenuity, courage and self-sacrifice.

The eldest son, James Cosmo Melvill, had, at the age of fifteen, entered the service of the East India Company, in which he later became Chief Secretary to the Court of Directors and a K.C.B. He was the first of many members of the family to become associated with that company. The father's concern and training for his children's early education was probably continued by Mrs. Melvill, who was described as a "woman of strong character, piety and keen intelligence."[4] The writer of the memoir of Henry Melvill

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1 Vol. II, No. 14, p. 33.

2 p. 411.

3 Joubert de La Ferte, op. cit., p. 6.

4 Ibid.

published immediately after his death and included in the volumes of Sermons Preached During the Latter Years of His Life, said,"He was carefully educated by a private tutor who was an accomplished scholar."[1] He leaves us in the dark wishing that he had said who this tutor was. At the age of about sixteen years, Henry entered the counting-house of an uncle;[2] and while thus employed, all his leisure hours were spent reading, and more of his interest and time were given to the study of literature than to improving on the "drudgery of his mechanical avocation." At the end of three years, Henry had "sufficently manifested his devotion to the one and his unfitness for the other, to convince his friends of the necessity for making arrangements whereby he might attend the university."[3] In October, 1817, at the age of nineteen, Henry Melvill entered St. John's College, Cambridge.

Section II

University of Cambridge

1817-1829

The Cambridge of Melvill's day still kept many of the characteristics of a medieval university; youth had not yet come into its own; undergraduates were strongly discouraged from interesting themselves actively in the affairs of the

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1 Vol. I, p. xii

2 The Church Magazine, op. cit., p. 34

3 Roose, op. cit., p. 411

nation and the world; being treated like children, they often acted like children. Religious enthusiasm, whether generated by leadership inside or outside the Established Church, was taboo.[1] Dr. William Craven, Master of St. John's, recognizing that "dangerous taint of religious enthusiasm" in the student body, persuaded Miles Bland, the mathematician, to introduce Sunday evening lectures on "The Historical Books of the Old Testament," to which attendance was required of all students. Ironically enough, these "classes" were called at the time in the evening when Charles Simeon popularized services for the students at Trinity Church,[2] and thus the authorities attempted to immunize the student body from evangelical enthusiasm.

The student aristocracy of Cambridge was stratified into three distinct classes--Fellow-commoners, Pensioners, and Sizars.[3] Henry Melvill entered as a Sizar. Relieved of his responsibilities in the counting-house, he threw himself into the work of the University with unlimited vigour. For his four undergraduate years at Cambridge, there is hardly a shred of biographical material. There

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1 D.A. Winstanley, Early Victorian Cambridge, p. 26.

2 J.B. Mullinger, St. John's College, pp. 262-264.

3 R.F. Scott, St. John's College Cambridge, p. 96. Scott says of the classes: "Fellow-commoners, sons of noblemen or wealthy land owners, formed a privileged class of undergraduates who dined at the High Table with the Fellows. The Pensioners were the Oxford equivalent of the Commoners, usually sons of middle-class parents able to pay from their own income for their commons, chambers and other required fees. The Sizar entered the College by paying fees at a reduced scale. They were attached to a Fellow or Fellow-commoner not exactly as a servant, but he was to make himself available and generally useful."

is reason to believe, as we shall see later, that his thoughts did not turn to the ministry until after he had received his B.A. degree. The course of study which Melvill pursued was general in scope, but predominently mathematical in emphasis. Training in theology received little attention. The theory was that to be a clergyman, required only a general education equal to that of any well informed layman. The Bishop of Gloucester, preaching before the University in 1835, asserted with the pledged support of three hundred Members of Parliament, noblemen and clergy, the unsatisfactory nature of the training for the ministry. "The preparatory studies," said the Bishop, "are too general and vague to have any sufficient bearing on the future usefulness of the Christian minister. The present courses admit, and even require some acquaintance with the evidences and the truths of religion; but, up to the period of the first degree, there is scarcely anything to distinguish the students in theology from his contemporaries."[1] Even if Melvill had already decided on theology, his training at St. John's would have differed little from his class-mate's who was to work in the Bank of England after graduation.

Neglected and sterile though the theology of the University may have been, Charles Simeon worked for half a century to "build up an evangelical tradition at Cambridge, and to educate clergymen and preachers. Young men responded eagerly to his zeal and loved, reverenced and obeyed him. One after another caught the fire at his altar, and went

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[1] F.W.B. Bullock, The History of Ridley Hall, Vol. I, p. 17.

forth, sent by him to preach his doctrine."[1] In the many excellent and complete records of Simeon's unique ministry, there seems to be no specific mention of Melvill's participation in Simeon's Conversation Parties or Sermon Classes, but one cannot help seeing parallels to Simeon's thought, emphases and style in Melvill's sermons; and the evangelical training of his youth must have left him receptive to the inspiration which Simeon offered the students.[2]

However much or little Melvill may have been attracted to religion during his undergraduate days, the significant aspect of his training lay in his study of mathematics. During the first year at Cambridge, "his diligence and abilities enabled him to outstrip all competitors, and become the first man of his year--the largest class which at that time has been known; and he continued to head the lists at the college examinations, until he proceeded to his bachelor's degree in 1821."[3] The climax to his four years of study came when in the "Senate House examinations he was bracketed with two others for the first place, and after a fresh trial stood as Second Wrangler."[4] "In the ensuing

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1 F.W. Cornish, A History of the English Church in the Nineteenth Century, Vol. I, p. 24.

2 We note here that in 1837, Melvill preached a sermon on behalf of the London Society for the Conversion of the Jews, a favourite Society of Simeon's and in so doing said that, "In preaching for this Society, I redeem a promise which I made to him (Simeon) when my duties brought me last year to this place. I obey his wish, I comply with his request." University Sermons, 1837, p. 133.

3 Roose, op. cit., p. 411.

4 The Church Magazine, op. cit., p. 33

examination for Smith's Prize, usually considered to embrace a higher range of mathematical subjects, Melvill reversed the usual relation with the Senior Wrangler[1] and was declared First Smith Prizeman."[2]

When Melvill was preaching before the University as the Select Preacher for the month of November, 1839, he gave an autobiographical judgment on the merits of the system of education in which he was trained. "There is no better preparation for the work of a Christian preacher," he said, "than a diligent attention to the peculiar studies of this University. They who have not made trial may hold a different opinion; but those who have had experience with which to judge, would fasten down a young man to the academic course, if they found him burning with desire to 'do the work of an evangelist.' It may be urged by ignorance, I aim at being a theologian, why lose precious time in becoming a mathematician? It is replied by experience, become a mathematician, for the very purpose and with the very hope of becoming a theologian. Fatal error! into which many have fallen, who, because the thing learnt was not to be preached, have concluded that the learning could not assist them in the preaching. Whereas, the man who schools his mental faculties by abstract study is fitting himself for an office which specially requires that the judgment be in exercise, and the

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[1] Those who attained the first class in the public mathematical honour examinations were called "wranglers." As wranglers, they were classed in order of merit, headed by the Senior Wrangler, Second Wrangler, etc.

[2] D. Moore, The Veil Lifted Up, p. 20.

the imagination in check: he may not be acquiring the truth which the preacher is to communicate, but he is doing much to secure that the preacher shall communicate only truth."[1]

After winning the highest scholastic honours which the University of Cambridge could bestow, Melvill was a marked man. Peterhouse immediately offering him a Fellowship, which he accepted on the understanding that he was to have a share in the tuition.[2]

Thomas A. Walker in his history of the College is impressed by the patriotism of the Master and Fellows of Peterhouse in this period. The records show that they "contributed to the National Funds; subscribed for the support of French Nuns; and subsidized the supply of flannel waistcoats to the King's forces serving on the Continent. . . If they drank deeply, gambled regularly and swore freely, they had hearts open to the calls of charity."[3] The College was attracting young men of birth and fortune. "Men of standing migrated from other colleges; and if Peterhouse lost to St. John's such a scholar as Henry John Rose, she drew in exchange Henry Melvill, the now famous evangelical leader and Principal of Haileybury."[4]

For the events in his life as a Fellow, the documented facts are few, but we do know that in 1825, he was ordained

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1 Melvill, University Sermons, 1839, pp. 32-33.
2 Roose, op. cit., p. 412.
3 T.A. Walker, Peterhouse, p. 100.
4 Ibid., p. 101.

by the Bishop of Ely.[1]

In considering him as a candidate for Camden Chapel, the Trustees, sent an "anxious note" to the Bishop asking his help and counsel on the qualifications of Henry Melvill. The Bishop referred them to the Rev. M. Pritchett, of Charterhouse. To the Trustee's question, "Do you consider his piety as truly established?" Pritchett replied in a letter of December 26th, 1828: "It is not of very long standing. Not more, I believe, than about three years; but so far as I can judge it may be considered as established. The period during which I have known him has been about two and a half years, for before, I scarcely knew him at all, though I had seen him at Walthamstow. I have seen no wavering or inconsistency in him."[2] This evidence suggests that Melvill's decision to enter the ministry closely followed the "establishing of his piety" which Pritchett places sometime in 1825. Another comment in the same letter gives an interesting hint about the cause of this awakened interest in religion. "With respect to his liability to be 'taken captive by silly women' about which you virtually ask an opinion, I have scarcely seen him in any female society, except that of his own family and mine, who of course are not silly women, but wise

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1 Admissions to Peterhouse or St. Peter's College, compiled by T.A. Walker. The Bishop of Ely at the time was Bowyer Edw. Sparke of whom Cornish writes: "Though at the time it was not considered scandlous, he, his son, and son-in-law, are said to have received among them more than £ 30,000 a year in Church money." Cornish, op. cit., Vol. I, p. 102.

2 Quoted in The Camden Parish Magazine, Vol. I, No. 18, p.123.

women. However, he is engaged to a young lady of Wilton, near Cambridge, and will thereby be sheltered from some darts which may be shot at him. He was formerly engaged to another lady, who died rather suddenly. It was the loss of her, it is said, that brought him to serious thought. Before that he must have known the theory of religion, for his mother and sisters are all pious people. But I am told that he was not ever neutral, but rather bitter, even preaching against the truth. He is now, so far as I can learn, acting a decided and manly part as a Christian at Cambridge, and preaching at St. Mary's to crowded congregations, both of gownsmen and townspeople."[1]

Some time between the years 1822 and 1825, Melvill's scholarship and purpose took on their new direction toward theology, ministry in the Church of England, and preaching. After his ordination, he frequently occupied the pulpit of Great St. Mary's. "In consequence of the high character of his first sermons, the Dean of Ely, who, as master of St. John's, had the chief part in the appointment, proposed to Mr. Melvill that he take the Hulsean Lectureship, and employ its course on topics connected with popery."[2] This offer he was unable to accept because of other commitments.

Melvill's intellectual acumen was recognized in his appointment to the offices of Examiner in Hebrew, Examiner in Mathematical Tripos, and Tutor. While the excellence of

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1 Ibid.

2 Roose, op. cit., p. 412.

of his preaching resulted in his being named Select Preacher to the University, it also attracted the attention of the Trustees of Camden Chapel, Camberwell. The offer of active clerical duty, his engagement to Margaret Alice Jennings, and the "ban on marriage of Fellows while retaining University and College offices,"[1] must all have contributed to persuading him to quit the University at the age of thirty-one, and accept the call to Camden Chapel, where he preached his first sermon on Easter day, April 21st, 1829.

Section III

Camden Chapel

1829-1844

Although Melvill regarded schism as a sin, his first pastorate was to be as minister of an unrepentant church founded as a chapel on July 1st, 1797.[2] In Camberwell, an aristocratic suburb of London, a few devout laymen became dissatisfied with services at the Parish Church of St. Giles, where the worship was of a "high and dry order," and the preaching "flat, stale and unprofitable,"[3] twelve determined men, led by Mr. Montague, met on May 13th, 1796 and decided to build a chapel for the "alone preaching of the Gospel." In eight week's time they had secured land, engaged a bricklayer and raised a large part of the money,

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1 Bullock, op. cit., p. 18.

2 W.R. Greenhalgh, Camden Church: A Centenary Leaflet, p. 3.

3 A.R.M. Finlayson, Life of Canon Fleming, p. 89.

and construction of the building began. The first service of worship in the new chapel was held a year later. The first thrity years' history of the chapel, prior to Melvill's arrival, tells a story of the difficulties in maintaining a plan of chapel ministry where the Gospel might be preached faithfully, vigorously and continuously. The price to be paid for independence was a small number of capable and qualified preachers available for service outside the Established Church, but it can be said for the Trustees that no appointment was made for the sake of expediency. The Trustees of Camden Chapel seem to have fitted the description of E.D. Woodward, "Chapel stewards. . .tended to be cautious minded men, of good standing in their own circles, and not the type of which revolutionaries are made."[1] In 1828, having been long vexed by the difficulty of finding qualified leadership outside the Established Church--a group of the trustees headed by Henry Kemble, M.P. for Surrey,[2] pushed through the proposal that Camden Chapel be licensed as a proprietary chapel.[3] By so doing they sacrificed their absolute authority, for in the selection of a minister, the approval of the Vicar of Camberwell and the

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1 E.L. Woodward, The Age of Reform 1815-1870, p.484.

2 G.J. Davies in Successful Preachers on p.44 says, "Melvill soon after his arrival in Camberwell married Mr. Kemble's sister." Kemble and Melvill were brothers-in-law, but through Kemble's marriage to Melvill's sister.

3 G.R. Balleintine, A History of the Evangelical Party, pp. 61-62 gives a more detailed account of the part proprietary chapels played in this period.

Bishop of Winchester became necessary. The Trustees, however, gave up none of their convictions about the brand of evangelical Christianity which they were determined to have preached, and their thorough survey of the field led them to Henry Melvill, the "rising genius of Cambridge."[1] The resolution of the committee appointing Melvill as the licensed minister of Camden stipulated that he was "to read the Church of England service and preach in the morning and evening."[2]

On Easter Sunday of 1829 the birthday of Camden as a licensed chapel, was celebrated, and Melvill preached the first sermon in his new charge. Preaching, "in the evening from Psalm 71:16, he gave a full statement for his views of the solemn and sacred charge he was about to undertake."[3] From his first sermon in Camden, his name was made as a preacher.

When the "Story of Camden" was written for the Parish Magazine in 1892, an old parishioner, William Bois told of his experience at Melvill's first service: "After standing during the entire service on the staircase leading to the gallery, I felt myself quite rewarded, for the inconvenience experienced, for my attention was completely absorbed while Mr. Melvill was in the pulpit. The sermon

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1 Greenhalgh, op. cit. p. 5.

2 Camden Parish Magazine, November 1892, p. 117

3 Ibid., quoting a letter written to the Bishop of Winchester by C. Winton and dated April 21, 1839.

was long, but divided into separate parts; during the delivery of each there was absolute silence, but at the end of each there was a pause, when at the end of the strain the congregation relieved itself by coughing, etc. Mr. Melvill then took up another division of his subject. I was so pleased that I attended several times, but took care to be in good time and obtained a seat in one or other of the galleries."[1]

On one point all witnesses of Melvill's ministry agree: he was a popular preacher. The attempt is made in a later chapter to find the springs of his popularity. For the moment, the peculiar powers of his thought and preaching method will not be our concern; but to complete the picture of his ministry at Camden, we must mention illustrations of his success.

In the biography of Canon Fleming, one of Melvill's close friends and a successor at Camden Chapel, he said, "In Melvill's time we are told that 'statesmen, courtiers, senators, and other celebrities jostled each other in the aisles of this suburban sanctuary, and lent the tribute of their presence to the expressed approval of the public.'"[2]

Camden Chapel was originally a barn-like structure with narrow side aisles and pews crammed into every available space. It was, in the words of the present Vicar

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[1] Ibid., p. 124

[2] Finlayson, op. cit. p. 89

of Camberwell, "typically evangelical in design" and ill-fitted for the Anglican service of worship. Melvill's immediate popularity made it necessary to make "considerable enlargement in the building, and transepts were added at the north end, thus giving the edifice the ground plan of a letter 'T'."[1] With this additional seating capacity, the chapel could accommodate seventeen hundred, yet Melvill attracted congregations which spilled over into the aisles and packed into the gallery and pulpit stairways. Worshippers came from all parts of London in such numbers that "a line of Sunday omnibuses was instituted for the convenience of his numerous admirers in the outlying parts of the Metropolis."[2] The Rev. George J. Davies, reflecting on the two occasions when he heard Melvill, said, "I had to stand all the time. . . the very cabmen and 'bus conductors used his name to charm with. . you would hear them shouting, 'Melvill--Camerwell! Sermon just commencing.'"[3]

Melvill became the "most popular preacher in London".[4] This popularity, combined with his persuasive powers as a

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1 E. Walford, Old and New London, p. 274.

2 Memorials of Old Haileybury College, p. 274; hereafter cited as Memorials

3 Davies, p. 148, op. cit.

4 Walford, op. cit., p. 274: "I am doing no injustice to other ministers, whether in the Church or out of it, in saying this. The fact is not only susceptible of proof, but is often proved in a manner which all must admit to be conclusive. When a sermon is advertised to be preached by Mr. Melvill, the number of strangers attracted to the particular place is invariably greater than is ever drawn together in the same church or chapel when any one of the other popular ministers in London are appointed to preach on a precisely similar occasion."

pleader, made him much in demand for special sermons on behalf of religious societies and philanthropic institutions. It is probably fair to say that his influence was exercised almost exclusively through his sermons as he remained aloof from active participation in the societies which he so enthusiastically and effectively supported from the pulpit. It is, in fact, an inherent characteristic of his whole ministry that all outside activities were subordinated to his preaching.

Little mention is ever made of the pastoral side of Melvill's ministry. James Grant, writing during Melvill's tenth year at Camden, says, "As a pastor there is a great variety of opinion: some affirm that he is most indefatigable in visiting his flock; others maintain that he only visits a select portion of them; while a third party asserts with equal confidence that he pays no pastoral visits at all. The real fact is, that the reverend gentleman's people being so numerous and scattered, he does not profess to pay ministerial visits at all in the ordinary sense in which the words are understood. . . but he is most exemplary and indefatigable in his visits to the sick and dying, and in such cases he is prompt in visiting the poor as the rich. It is highly to his credit, in order that he may have the more time for his visits to the sick and dying, he declines innumerable invitations of a most pressing nature, to dinner and other parties."[1]

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[1] J. Grant, Metropolitan Pulpit, II, pp. 17-18.

One dinner party which Melvill did attend is mentioned by Henry Crabb Robinson, a well known man about town and intimate of Lamb, Coleridge, Wordsworth, and Southey. On July 9th, 1839, he wrote, "Dined at Joseph Hardcastle's. Melvill the popular preacher there, and F. Maurice and others. I had not seen him for a long time. He smiled when he saw me. I said, 'What, Saul among the prophets?' One incident worth mentioning, someone spoke of the American sect called Christ-ians. 'Aye,' said one of the divines, 'it is safer to lengthen a syllable than a creed.'" Writing later, Robinson ascribed his quip to Melvill, about whom he wrote, "cheerful and agreeable and not at all Puritanical."[1]

When John Ruskin and his family moved to Camberwell, they attended the services of Camden Chapel. "The transition to Denmark Hill," he writes, "had, however, in the first pride of it, an advantage also in giving our family Puritanism and promotion to a distinquished pew in Camden Chapel, quite near the pulpit. Henry Melvill was the only preacher I ever knew whose sermons were at once sincere, orthodox, and oratorical on Ciceronian principles."[2]

Ruskin's astute analysis of Melvill's worth was not confined to his preaching and he adds this experience of

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1 H.C.Robinson, Diary, Reminiscenses, and Correspondence, pp. 177-178.

2 The Works of John Ruskin, ed. by E.T. Cook and A. Wedderburn, Vol. XXXV, p. 366.

a pastoral call Melvill once made on the family. "Mr. Melvill was entirely amiable in the Church Visitant though not formidable in the Church Militant. There were not many poor in the district to be visited; but he became at once a kindly and esteemed friend to us, as for the present, serenely feeding lambs of his flock; and I shall always remember gratefully the unoffended smile with which one day, when he had called late, and I became restless during the conversation because my dinner was ready, he broke off his talk, and said, 'Go to your dinner!' I was greatly ashamed of myself for having been so rude; but went to my dinner, and attended better to Mr. Melvill's preaching ever afterwards--and owe to him all sorts of good help in close analysis, but especially, my habit of always looking, in every quotation from the Bible, to what goes before it and after."[1]

Of those who were influenced by Melvill's ministry at Camden, it is interesting to discover that in addition to Ruskin, Robert Browning was born at Camberwell; and that "As a boy, Prebendary Gordon Calthrop, the well-known Vicar of St. Augustine's, Highbury, attended Camden Chapel. It was from Canon Melvill that he gained his first impressions regarding the ministry."[2]

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[1] Ibid., p. 388

[2] Finlayson, op. cit., p. 90.

The Browning family while living in Camberwell were members of the Independant congregation which worshipped in York Street, Walworth. "My father," Miss Browning wrote, "was born and educated in the Church of England, and, for many years before his death, lived in her communion. He became a dissenter in middle life, and my mother, born and brought up in the Kirk of Scotland, became one also; but they could not be called bigoted, since in the evening we always attended the preaching of the Rev. Henry Melvill, whose sermons Robert much admired."[1]

One of Robert Browning's youthful ambitions was to enter the ministry. However, "From the time when he was a free agent he ceased to be even a regular churchgoer, though religion became more, rather than less, an integral part of his inner life; and his alleged fondness for a variety of preachers meant really that he only listened to those who, from personal association or conspicuous merit, were interesting to him. Canon Melvill was one of these men."[2]

Melvill's fifteen years residence in Camberwell was profitable, fruitful and useful. His stipend from the church was in the neighborhood of one thousand pounds per annum; his marriage to Margaret Alice Jennings in 1831 was blessed with nine children, all of whom were born in Camberwell

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1 S. Orr, Life and Letters of Robert Browning, p. 17.

2 Ibid., p. 48.

Grove. Having undertaken the first settled Church of England ministry at Camden, he made it one of the most famous places of worship in the metropolis through his pulpit oratory. Canon Fleming said of his ministry, "Some plant, others water, but he both planted and watered, while none was more ready to own that it was God who gave the increase. Some lay the foundation, and others rear the building, but he both laid the foundation and added the 'living stones' that grew here into a holy temple of the Lord. Of him it could not be said, 'Other men laboured, and ye have entered into their labours.' Laborious industry was one of his most striking characteristics, but it was the industry of a mind conscious of its own powers and delighting in their exercise."[1] His immediate successor at Camden, ~~the immediate successor at Camden~~, the Rev. Daniel Moore, wrote, "I believe throngs would have been attracted to his ministrations, if it had been only to listen to the proofs of his high intellectual power, his chastened oratory, his striking originality, his keen dialectic subtlety, his fertile and exhaustless stores of imagery and illustration."[2]

There is no evidence available which would indicate the reasons for his departure from Camberwell early in 1844.

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1 W. H. Blanch, Ye Parish of Camberwell, p. 210.

2 D. Moore, The Veil Lifted Up, p. 17

The Illustrated London News reports that, "a very gratifying testimonial of the high merits of the distinquished clergyman is now in process. They are giving him a splendid service of plate. The subscriptions already received amount to a very large sum, although the proposed memorial has been only privately mentioned, and no general meeting has been convened."[1]

One has the feeling that there must have been an air of mystery and reserve between the preacher and his people. In the pulpit, he was adored and acclaimed; as a person, his feelings and motives were observed from a respectful distance and assent came without question. With no hint of irony, the Camden Parish Magazine notes his departure in this succinct sentence, "In the meantime(while a successor was being sought) Henry Melvill had slipped off to his dignified post at Haileybury College."[2]

Section IV

College Administrator

1844--1857

At the turn of the century, a special committee of the East India Company had recommended the inadvisability of sending young men abroad before the age of eighteen, and this led to the founding of Haileybury College as a place for the training of cadets. A beautiful site was selected

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1 Vol. IV, 1844, p. 48.

2 December 1892, p. 17.

about two miles out of Hartford and twenty miles from London. There, in February, 1806, the first batch of students[1] arrived and paid one hundred guineas per annum for the privilege--while marking time--of being exposed to a curriculum which embraced "the classics, arithmetic, mathematics, elements of general law, and subjects pertaining to oriental learning."[2]

At the time of Henry Melvill's appointment to the Principalship of the College on December 19, 1843,[3] his elder brother, James Cosmo, held the influential position of Chief Secretary to the Court of Directors of the East India Company.

A colleague of Principal Melvill, Sir William Monier-Williams, has discovered much enlightening material covering this period of Melvill's life, which is published in Memorials of Old Haileybury College. "Although he brought with him," he writes, "a great reputation for pulpit eloquence and the earnest discharge of parochial duties, he had not, even at Cambridge--so far as I am aware--acquired much experience in the difficult work of superintending and controlling the disciples of a college."[4]

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1 Chambers Encyclopedia, Ed. 1924, singles out Lord Lawrence, Viceroy of India; Sir Charles Trevelyan; Bishop of Forbes; and Sir Henry Bartle Edward Frere as notably distinguished alumni.

2 Memorials, p. 15.

3 Hertford and Bedford Reformer, December 23, 1843.

4 Memorials, p. 152.

The Fellowship at Peterhouse was his only acquaintance with the administrative side of education, but even in that capacity, he must have indicated his potential capacity as an educator, for in 1838, he declined the invitation to accept the Mastership of Peterhouse.[1] A Camberwell sermon preached in the same year shows the thought which he had given to the problems and theory of education. Speaking on the text from Proverbs 22:6, "Train up a child in the way he should go; and when he is old, he will not depart from it," he states the theme of his sermon thus: "A child's native tendency is to going wrong, so that if left to itself, there is no reasonable expectation of its going right. . . away with all the dream and delusion of the innocence of childhood. . . We are in boyhood the very miniatures of what we should be in manhood, if it were not for the converting grace of God."[2] He then proceeds to develop his ideas on education. "Educate for eternity--aim at fitting a child for death and for judgment. . . We know, of course, what will be immediately urged against such a theory as this: we shall be accused of rejecting all knowledge which is not strictly religious, and of laying an interdict upon various acquirements, and still more upon various accomplishments. But

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1 Admissions to Peterhouse, Ed., Walker.

2 Melvill, a sermon entitled "Religious Education", preached at Camden Chapel, January 28, 1838 on behalf of the National Society, p. 11.

the accusation is unfounded, and shows a forgetfulness or ignorance of a great truth, namely, that religion gives fresh interest to everything worth knowing and a fresh grace to everything worth doing." Illustrating this point he maintains that "reading--is access to the Bible; writing--the art by which divine truth is transmitted from age to age; and sciences--showing God's amazing craftsmanship; history--the course of providence and the fulfilment of prophecy; and the study of 'dead languages'--shows that these languages admit us into the Bible and into works closely associated with the Bible: why then should not the student be made to feel, as he applies himself to Homer and Cicero, that he is but strengthening his acquaintanceship with Isaiah and St. Paul? Why should we not then affirm that we have laid before you a plan, which, if thoroughly acted out, would be vastly more likely to produce gentlemen, and scholars, and good men of business, than any of those much vaunted systems which deal with the intellect, and let alone the heart; or propose to polish the metal, without attempting to refine it: if it be a sound maxim--and sound it must be, for Christ himself delivered it--that the direct way of obtaining such things as are good for us upon earth, is to seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, what is that but the carrying this maxim into the business

of education to account that the best mode of improving the mind, of forming the manners, and fitting for a profession, it never to suffer the present world to keep the next out of sight, to draw every motive from eternity, and to make every pursuit terminate in God."[1] Thus we may suspect that with these strong convictions on education, the principalship of Haileybury College challenged him to practise what he preached.

While in Camberwell, fantastic rumours circulated as to the amount of time and peaceful, uninterrupted solitude which Melvill demanded for the preparation of his sermons. If he had hoped for such conditions at Haileybury, any ivory twoer he may have envisaged, must have toppled over soon after his arrival, for he assumed a post impregnated with political intrigue and nursing the wounds of a stormy past. The administration of any college made up of nineteenth century adolescents would call for the best in a man; furtner, this student body was unique in that every boy was already nominated to one of the finest and most lucrative careers in the empire, that of the Indian Civil Service. The knotty problem of administration was further complicated by the fact that on-the-spot administrative measures of the College Council were often contested and reversed by rulings of the Court of Directors. This was especially evident in

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[1] Ibid., pp. 12-17

the cases of discipline when a favourite son or nominee was concerned.

Strained relations and disturbing frictions seemed to have been common at Haileybury. The resignation of Melvill's predecessor, Principal Le Bas, was due to a student demonstration in which a few windows were broken and Le Bas tangled for the last time with the problem of discipline. "The College Council was abolished, all powers of ultimate discipline were put in the hands of the new Principal(Melvill), who had even the power in extreme cases of dismissing the Dean from office."[1]

Even with the absolute powers which he possessed, the new Principal's task was not an enviable one. "There was chronic friction between the Principal and the Dean, James A. Jeremie, who had been by-passed as candidate for the job." Monier-Williams remarked that "It was distressing to observe a constant morbid tendancy on the part of Mr. Jeremie to misinterpret all the Principal's official acts."[2]

Speckled though his administration was with disciplinary problems and volatile personalities, life at Haileybury was mainly an uneventful routine of chapels, lectures and hall dinners. Faculty homes were opened to those young men who appreciated the amenities and refining influences of a

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1 Memorials, p. 106.

2 Ibid., p. 165.

home. Frequent social gatherings for the students were arranged and of the Melvill hospitality it is said, ". . .students were always welcome to their home by him and his equally kind-hearted wife. He evidently felt that the special circumstances of his position as head of a college situated on a lonely heath, made it incumbent upon him to take large and generous views on the duty of hospitality. Hence it happened that, not withstanding the comparative tranquility of his previous life at Camberwell, and notwithstanding the strictness of the evangelical views with which he was credited, he thought it right to invite the young men of Haileybury to attractive evening parties, at which dancing was not an unusual incident."[1]

In 1850, Melvill was named Golden Lecturer at St. Margaret's, Lothbury, a preaching responsibility which he held for seven years while Principal of Haileybury. The lectureship called for a sermon at midday every Tuesday before a congregation of office workers from the banking district of London. Here again he proved himself to be an effective and popular preacher, but in speaking before the students in the Chapel at Haileybury, his success was not so marked. It has been observed that this preaching was before a congregation of "self-sufficient youth, most of whom were wise in their own conceits and prided themselves

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[1] Ibid., p. 158.

on despising all emotional appeals to their higher natures, and were disposed to regard every sermon, however eloquent, as something to be tolerated on the principle of unavoidable acquiescence in a natural infliction. Monier-Williams tells of a former Prime Minister's experience in the Haileybury Chapel. "Mr. George Canning, the celebrated Minister, was once, as head of the India board, asked by the Court of Directors to come to the College and 'lecture to the lads on their conduct'. He came, but during his address broke down. Referring to his failure afterward he said to a friend:--'I have faced bitter opposition in the House of Commons; I have encountered turbulent riots at Liverpool, etc; but I was never floored and daunted till now, and that by a lot of Haileybury boys.'"[1]

The bulk of Melvill's public appearances were made in the pulpit. He seldom appeared at either secular or religious meetings. As Principal, however, it was his duty twice a year to act as host to the Court of Directors and give the 'after-dinner'speech at their luncheon. Although rarely speaking extempore, it is said that in these reunions, he was unrivalled. "It would be impossible to exaggerate the charm of his rhythmical delivery. Every word he uttered told; and yet," continues Monier- Williams, "I have heard him say he never studied the wording of his speeches beforehand.

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[1] Ibid., p. 157.

They seemed to flow naturally with a force of expression and a harmony of intonation, which acted like magic in compelling the attention of the most obtuse, and winning the admiration of the most cynical of his hearers."[1]

In The Times, an entire speech is reported; the following is a fair sample. The Court of Directors were meeting at Haileybury. Mr. Mangles, M.P. was then chairman of the East India Company and Melvill in his speech referred to the Chairman's son, Ross Mangles, who had recently distinguished himself in battle during the Indian Mutiny: "If I were a layman, instead of a clergyman,"said the Principal, "I should be proud to be cahirman of this Honourable Company, and being so, I should be prouder still to be father of an honourable son who, at the risk of his own life, took a wounded comrade on his shoulders and bore him safely from the field of battle."[2] In speaking of the heroism of Ross Mangles, he was, in fact speaking as a father who knew the meaning of having a son serving in India during the perilous days of the mutiny. His eldest son, Henry, was with the Bengal Calvary, in which he later rose to the rank of Lieutenant General.[3]

In 1853, radical alterations began to be made in the

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1 Ibid., p. 158.

2 The Times, December 8, 1857.

3 E.J. Jowbert de La Perte states that Henry Melvill's four sons all served in India: Henry Melvill, jr. a Lieut. General in the Indian Army; Sir Maxwell Melvill, K.C.I.E. in the Bombay Civil Service; Richard Gwatkin Melvill in Bengal Civil Service and Francis Melvill also in the Bombay Civil Service where he rose to be Chief Commissioner. One of his five daughters married Sir John Gordon of the Bengal Civil Service.

policies of Haileybury. Directors lost their privilege of nomination.[1] "Commissioners(Lord Macaulay, Professor Jowett, Principal Melvill and others) were appointed in 1854 to examine into and report upon the best mode of admission by examination to writerships in the Indian Civil Service."[2] The Commission reported the following year "in favour of examination; raised the age of candidates; and suggested that 'men who have obtained the highest honours at Cambridge and Oxford' should compete; and considered that Haileybury would have to undergo great changes."[3] And changes came quickly, but not to the advantage of the college. On the heels of the Commissioners' report in 1855, an Act of Parliament abolished the East India College "from and after 1 January 1858; and no new students were admitted from 1 January 1856."[4]

It is difficult to assess Melvill's impact upon the life of Haileybury men and his success as an educator. In the History of Hertfordshire, he is judged a failure.[5] Sir William Monier-Williams reserves judgment, but does say, "He was thought to be somewhat deficient in that firmness and decision of character, and that tact in deal-

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1 History of the County of Hertfordshire, ed., Wm. Page, p. 98.

2 The Times, Friday, February 10, 1871.

3 Wm. Page, op cit., p. 98.

4 Ibid.

5 Ibid.

ing with subordinates, which are usually looked for in the highest order of collegiate administrators."[1]

One thing is certain, he was unsuccessful in translating his admirable theory of Christian education into practice at Haileybury. His forte did not prove to be that of applying principles which he preached, to the stubborn facts of a concrete situation. "It has always been a matter of some surprise to me," says a former student, "that our professors, with Canon Melvill, the Golden Lecturer, at their head, winked at our revels; but perhaps with prophetic eyes they saw the mutiny with all its attendant horrors, and said amongst themselves, 'Let these poor fellows be merry whilst they can, for even the Aztecs allowed every indulgence to their victims.'"[2]

Section V

Golden Lecturer

1850-1857

Evangelical preachers of the late eighteenth and early nineteenth century were made to stand their distance in the London pulpit. At the turn of the century only three livings in London churches were held by Evangelicals. Their "preaching from the pulpit," writes Balleine, "would have been almost silenced for a whole generation, if

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1 Memorials, p. 158.

2 E. Lockwood, The Early Days of Marlborough College, p. 152.

it had not been for the lectureships and the proprietary chapels."[1] Henry Melvill's effective preaching of the Gospel in the proprietary chapel of Camden has been mentioned. His pulpit powers were utilized as a lecturer from 1850 through 1856, when amid a storm of controversy, he was appointed to the Golden Lectureship after the resignation of the Rev. Thomas Pelham Dale.

The custom had arisen under the Stuarts of pious benefactors endowing lectureships in their parish churches, to increase the opportunities for religious instruction. "The foundation of the Golden Lectureship dates back to 1614, when a Mr. William Jones bequeathed a house to the Haberdasher's Company to endow a Divinity Lecture. The entire share of the proceeds to go to, 'such learned and faithful preacher as the Company of Haberdashers of London shall appoint.'"[3] As the property value of the gift increased, the lectureship became a lucrative opportunity for an enterprising preacher.[4]

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1 G.R. Balleine, A History of the Evangelical Party, p. 161.

2 Finlayson, op. cit., p. 307.

3 Hogg's Instructor, Vol. VI, p. 289.

4 There are three theories as to the origin of the name "Golden Lecure" after its establishment as the Jones Lecture. (1) Because the lecture was given in a church located across the street from the Bank of England where everywhere was "Gold, gold, and nothing but gold, yellow and hard, and shining and cold!"(2) Some say that it was thus named because of the traditional "golden mouthed orators."(3) Another theory is that in time the amount of the emolument increased to such a large sum that hence the name Golden Lecture was attached.

John Ruskin in a letter which he wrote to Melvill's predecessor, Canon Dale, mentioned the grumbling provoked by Melvill's appointment. "I am very sorry both for the cause and the fact of your leaving us in the city--and the more so because I am vexed at the way in which people are taking up the question of the choice of a successor;--instead of simply considering who would be most useful, and who would leave you least cause to regret the necessity of your own abandonment of us, I hear everybody talking about clergymen's incomes as if the founder of that lecture had meant it only to provide a poor clergyman with a living. What business have they with this matter? The man that preaches most truth and with most power is the man that should have it--if he had a million a year besides. Although of two good men, one would of course give it to the poorer; but it is a bitter shame, in my mind, and a foul want of charity to accuse Mr. Melvill of avarice because he comes forward for the thing. Cannot they understand that such a man may feel it painful to hold his tongue, and may feel that he has no power of doing the good he has meant to do, and this is the thing he needs?"[1]

Melvill was the target of criticism and was considered by some to be guilty of pluralism because of the income he

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[1] Ruskin, op. cit., Vol. XXXVI, p. 94. The actual amount paid Melvill as Golden Lecturer is uncertain. Estimates range from £ 800 advanced by Grant to £ 370 by Davies with £400 named as the figure by Finlayson and £ 500 suggested in Hogg's Instructor.

already received as Chaplain to the Tower and Principal of Haileybury.

A writer in the periodical, Hogg's Instructor, sloughs off the controversy with these remarks: "We care little about the thing, simply as an affair of money; but right glad we are that the patrons have selected such a man as Mr. Melvill for the important office, and that it has neither fallen into the hands of some muttering image of a man, whose audience would consist of cobwebs and 'dearly beloved Roger,' or into those of some fanatical Sacramentarian, who would conceal the glories of Messiah amidst the impious mummeries of superstition. It is true there are many excelent evangelical clergymen, any one of whom might have held the lectureship, but Mr. Melvill has it, and has it honourably; and because of our esteem for the powerful preacher, and our faith in the doctrines he teaches, we say, long may he keep it."[1]

The lectureship required a sermon at eleven o'clock every Tuesday morning in St. Margaret's of Lothbury, a typical downtown church located in the heart of the financial district, opposite the Bank of England. The sanctuary is described as "small, and cold, and mouldy," but at least once during the week, the church came alive and charged with excitement. On a weekday morning, at a time more acceptable for morning coffee than a sixty-minute sermon, bankers' clerks, members of the stock exchange, business

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[1] op. cit., p. 289

men and ladies of fashionable society drawn by the magnetic powers of Melvill's message, crowded into St. Margaret's.

For seven years Principal Melvill made the weekly trip from Hertford to London in order to preach in St. Margaret's. The crowds in the church week after week attest the staying power of Melvill's preaching. Many who came to hear him were "ripe and matured" Christians who had grown up under the preaching of men like Watts, Wilkenson and Thomas Dale, former Golden Lecturers. "They came to be taught as they had been taught before, and to be built up as they had been built up before; and while not less than others, perhaps riveted by the transcendent eloquence of the preacher, yet thankful to lose sight of him in his grand settings forth of Christ. . . the living Saviour to living men."[1]

An observer writing in 1851 gives his impressions after hearing one of Melvill's early "lectures". "There is no pomposity, no glitter, none of that offensive 'look-at-me' idea which naturally belongs only to weak men, but which sometimes, perhaps unconsciously, creeps upon truly able men who have acquired some degree of popularity. Mr. Melvill is very popular, perhaps as much as any clergyman of the Church of England, but he does not seem to be aware of it. This is true greatness. He seems to be aware of but one

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[1] Ibid.

thing, one all-absorbing thought, that he is delivering the message of God to men, and that he must deliver his own soul at the same time from the guilt of concealing any part of that message. We cannot resist the impression that he reverently realizes the presence of his great Master, and speaks of Him as in His hearing. The deep solemnity and breathless attention of the congregation prove that they feel this. Every eye is fixed upon the preacher, and every ear open to hear great truths about God, Christ, the human soul and eternity."[1]

Most of his hearers sat or stood in rapt attention and left the service inspired and satisfied, but there was the occasional disgruntled and disappointed listener. Melvill once laughingly told of an incident which occured while he was traveling from London to Hastings. "He was seated in a first-class carriage opposite a garrulous old gentleman, who in the course of conversing omnibus rebus, introduced the subject of preaching, and failing at the moment to recognize Melvill, asked him whether he had heard the celebrated preacher Henry Melvill; to which the latter, without betraying himself or his own inward amusement, replied that he certainly had heard him more than once. 'Well,' rejoined the fellow traveller, 'So have I, and the first sermon was pretty good, but the second was great non-

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[1] Ibid.

sense.' Soon after the train arrived at Hastings, and all having to alight, Melvill gave his fellow traveler a meaning look and said, 'Good-bye; I hope you have better luck next time.' The confusion of the unfortunate critic upon immediately discovering his mistake is better imagined than described."[1]

If, at times, Melvill's highly polished rhetoric, strained metaphors, and redundance disappointed some of his hearers, at least he faithfully preached the Gospel so that "once during the bustle of the week, God's voice might be heard as well as that of Mammon."[2] His ability to direct the thoughts and emotions into a vital communion with God is expressed in this account of one listener's experience. "The service is over. What a change! We are opposite the Bank of England, amidst the rush, the throng, the pressure, the voice of the multitudes, every one looking for his gain from his quarter. Everything is earthly. The contrast is violent. We feel as if fallen, as if forcibly driven out of paradise, to grub for the bread that perishes among the mould and filth of the polluted world; yet, after a moment's reflection, we realize the value of those divine truths to which we have been listening, feel their sustaining power, and their animating influence, and

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1 Memorials, p. 156.

2 The Weekly News Chronicle, Information found in a clipping from the Chronicle the date of which is unknown.

are persuaded that an evangelical ministry is the first element of national greatness."[1]

Section VI

Chaplaincy

Mr. Melvill's first appointment as a chaplain came from the Duke of Wellington in 1840 while he was still minister at Camden Chapel. His nomination as chaplain of the Tower of London and incumbent of the church within its precincts came at a time when public sentiment and salutary legislation were hitting hard and telling blows at the abuses of ecclesiastical patronage, which had long been considered a marketable property rather than a sacred trust. On this score Melvill's record seems to have been above reproach, for his brilliant preaching was the spark that drew attention to him as a candidate for appointment. It was while presiding at a public meeting, that the Duke of Wellington first heard Melvill speak, and he was so favourably impressed by him that he secured his appointment to the Tower and a warm friendship was established which lasted till the duke's death.

Canon Fleming, lecturing to a class in homiletics at the London College of Divinity told of the following incident: "Many years ago the old Duke of Wellington appointed Henry Melvill to be chaplain to the Tower of London, and

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[1] Hogg's Instructor, p. 292.

he sent Melvill a message that he wished to see him. During the short interview, Melvill said: 'I have preached to thousands of people, but never to soldiers; I shall be grateful for any hints your Grace may give me.' The duke made one of his laconic replies--'Be brief, and to the purpose.'"[1] Brevity, however, never became one of Melvill's virtues whether preaching to soldiers or not.

John Ruskin in one of his letters, give a hint about one of Melvill's duties at the Tower. "Today, being the first Sunday of the month, Mr. Melvill preached at the Tower and his curate gave us(i.e. the Camberwell Congregation) a sermon. . ."[2] In addition to the regular monthly sermon in the Royal Chapel of St. Peter ad Vincula, Melvill's presence was required at special occasions. The calamitous fire in the Tower on October 30, 1841 furnished a striking occasion for Melvill to display his genius in the selection of the appropriate text and the development of a theme close to the heart of his theology. Although we know for certain that he preached over the heads of two dukes and two queens that day,[3] his sermon on the text,

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1 Finlayson, op. cit., pp. 136-137.

2 Ruskin, op. cit., Vol. I, p. 490.

3 The Tower of London, p. 13. A pamphlet issued by the Ministry of Works, gives the following imformation: "Lying before the high altar in the Royal Chapel are in the words of Stow, 'two dukes between two queens, to wit, the Duke of Somerset and the Duke of Northumberland, between Queen Anne and Queen Katharine, all four beheaded!'

"Seeing then that all these things shall be dissolved, what manner of persons ought ye to be in all holy conversation and godliness," must have had a penetrating influence on the minds of all who heard him in the Royal Chapel.

He opened his sermon with a moving lament over the loss of so many memorials to the devouring flames of the fire. Although these historic trophies of Britain's victories perished, still there remained, he said, "the valour of British troops. . . that would hang our walls with standards of the foe, were God again to bid us draw the sword in a righteous cause."[1] Having established common footing, he stated his purpose, "The business of the preacher is not to dwell on the catastrophe itself, (but) to endeavour to turn it to account to the great work of moral instruction."[2] His exegesis of the text shows that the fire of which Peter speaks is not a local conflagration but one that shall "unfold in its spreadings the whole heavens and earth." He showed that happiness secured solely on objects of this world is usable only for a time and then disappears and leaves the "soul's mighty capacities empty." Recognizing that contemplation of the destruction of the universe is almost too sublime for the

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1 Melvill, a sermon on "The Dissolution of all Things, p. 62, preached at the Tower, November 7, 1841.

2 Ibid.

average person to ponder, his logic does not dwell in the heights of things perishable on the Day of Judgment, but descends to the lower and more cognitive level where the death of the individual snaps the comforting utility of things. He refuses to argue with the sensualist, the miser, the philosopher on their own grounds of satisfaction, "But," he said, "we will argue with them amidst the graves of the churchyard and our reasonings shall be the epitaphs of all ages and all ranks." In the conclusion he sums up his close argumentation and careful development in the following invitation to join in the Sacrament of the Lord's Supper: "Certainly there is special appropriateness on an occassion like the present in our inviting you to attend the table of the Lord, that you may partake of the Holy Communion. Where can you more fittingly render your praises, seeing that the sacrifice there offered is a sacrifice of thanksgiving: Come, then, that by obeying God's command, you may show your gratitude for deliverance from a threatened destruction, show it through a sacrament which commemorates how the fire of his wrath has been extinquished only by the blood of his Son. Come, that there obtaining more grace, you may be better fitted for the changes and chances of this uncertain life. Then when you come to die, yours may be trophies, unlike those whose loss we lament, over which the flames shall have no power, monuments which shall not perish even

in the last conflagration. You may be conquerors in the good fight of faith; and the trophies therein won shall be displayed in Heaven itself, the monuments of that conquest shall be your own glory, and your own happiness through the ages of eternity."

Whether the Duke of Wellington was in the congregation on this occasion we do not know, but for many years he sat under Melvill's preaching on the Anniversary Sunday Sermon of Trinity House, of which he was patron. As a youth, Wellington was stern, cold and unimpassioned. He had expelled the softer feelings of the heart, and his character as a soldier was thought to have reached perfection. "But a change came over Wellington. With every advancing year, the great heart of the unrivalled Captain softened into human sympathy--his care fell with more tenderness on the comforts and advancement of the common soldier. Always he had been motivated by the noble principle of justice, but in later life, justice became mellowed with the feelings of charity and mercy, and ennobled by the sentiments of faith and hope."[1]

Mr. Melvill was appointed a Chaplain in Ordinary to the Queen in 1853, the year in which the Duke of Wellington died. Only titular reference is made to this post and no records have been discovered of his experiences. But

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[1] Blackwood's Magazine, September 1860, p. 537.

here again, one of the letters published in Canon Fleming's correspondence sheds some light on the duties of a Queen's Chaplain. After notifying Fleming of his appointment, Earl Sidney, the Lord High Steward, said that as one of the Chaplains in Ordinary to the Queen, "It entails preaching at St. James's one Sunday in the year, . . . and there is a trifling emolument."[1]

Section VII

Canon of St. Paul's

1856-1871

For the last fifteen years of his life, Melvill served as a Canon of St. Paul's Cathedral. His appointment was conferred by Lord Palmerston in the year prior to the closing of Haileybury College in 1857. When Lord Palmerston became Prime Minister in 1855, those who knew him and the ecclesiastical appointments which it was in his power to make, shuddered. "I fear," wrote his cousin, Lord Shaftesbury, "his ecclesiastical appointments will be detestable. He does not know, in theology, Moses from Sidney Smith."[2] Fortunately, Palmerston recognized the limits of his knowledge and for nine years sought the wise counsel of Shaftesbury who had proved himself to be an 'Evangelical of Evangelicals' and one of the nineteenth

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1 Finlayson, op. cit., p. 182.

2 Hodder, Life of Lord Shaftesbury, Vol.II, p. 505.

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century's truly practising Christian laymen.[1] Melvill's appointment came during the period of reform when, largely through the influence of Lord Shaftesbury, the Church was less frequently considered merely another branch of the Civil Service.

Canon H. S. Holland saw the Chapter of St. Paul's in Melvill's time, as a body of men of the "old regime" steeped in "steril isolationism" and blind to the glaring practical duties of the Church. Everything was done on the smallest scale, and much was mean and slovenly in the last degree. The attendance of the chapter, and of the cathedral staff was reduced to a minimum. There was little attempt at discipline or at dignity in the conduct of the daily services."[2]

Phillips Brooks, the American clergyman, visiting England for the first time in 1865 and recording his impressions of the Old World wrote, "Cathedral life has come to appear to me, with all its elegant retirement, one of the most disagreeable of things, and Cathedral towns the deadest thing in England."[3]

One could hardly expect Melvill to bring about any great reform; he was aging, and even in his younger days he seems never to have made any efforts at practical re-

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1 Cornish, op. cit., II, p. 213.

2 Life and Letters of Dean Church, ed. Mary C. Church, pp. 208-209.

form. His contribution to the life of St. Paul's was that of a preacher and in this capacity his presence was felt. Phillips Brooks also sized up the preaching in England as "not great," but on the advice of Dean Milman, he heard Melvill at St. Paul's on Sunday, September 17, 1865. "In the afternoon," he writes, "I went to St. Paul's and heard Melvill, the preacher of the Golden Lectures--'the Prince of Preachers, he is called, sir,' said a man to me as we came out. Dean Melman told me the night before that Melvill was to preach, and told me also that he had just lost a daughter and he had offered to take his place, but Melvill preferred to do his own regular work. It was a perfect sermon, from "Now the God of peace grant you peace always by all means". The division and whole treatment was the simplest and most obvious, the style clear and exquisite as possible--no action, but the most finished intonation and articulation. He is an old, white-headed man with a noble figure and earnest, kindly face. 'You cannot come out of season to the Tree of Life,' he said, referring to Rev. xx.2: 'You may bring your season with you, and the tree takes it. You come in autumn, and it is an autumn tree, and bears autumn fruit.' It was the most perfect sermon, all in all, that I ever heard."[1]

While serving as Canon of St. Paul's Melvill accepted the living of Barnes, Surrey. A lovely manor, given by

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[1] A.V.G. Allen, Life and Letters of Phillips Brooks, Vol. I, pp. 560-561.

King Athelstand to the Dean and Chapter of St. Paul's, was held by Canon Melvill from 1863 to 1870.[1] Here he lived with his family in rest and seclusion and yet close enough to the city to be at hand for his Chapter duties in the Cathedral.

Canon Fleming, who succeeded the Rev. Daniel Moore at Camden Church in 1866, wrote in a letter to the Editor of the Parish Magazine, "No man ever spent a more happy seven years' ministry than I did at Camden. Canon Melvill treated me with all the kindness of a father to a son."[2] In the autumn of 1870, Melvill's health broke down and he resigned his Rectory. The following letter from Canon Melvill to Fleming is quoted by his biographer:[3]

Athenaeum Club, Pall Mall,
September 27, 1870

My Dear Mr. Fleming,--I happened to be in town all day, having taken charge of your Cathedral, in order to let Liddon go on special business to Oxford. But your letter came just as I was leaving home, so that I can answer it without delay.

I am to see the Bishop's secretary, Mr. Lee, this afternoon in order to sign the papers which have to do with my resignation of the Living of Barnes. The resignation has afterwards to be accepted by the Bishop, so that I presume it will not be till next week that I cease to be the Rector.

We are now making what despatch we can in moving our goods to Amen Corner. My successor at Barnes--the Rev. P. G. Mead, Senior Fellow and Tutor of University College Oxford--is as anxious as we are that the Rectory should be speedily vacated. We only await the transfer of goods, in order to take our departure for Devonshire, and I most

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1 Ibid., p. 559.

2 J. E. Anderson, Parish of Barnes, pp. 10, 63.

3 Finlayson, op. cit., pp. 95-96.

sincerely hope that we shall not be detained beyond next week. And when you remember that after having resumed pulpit duties on Ash Wednesday after a most severe illness, I have not had a single unoccupied Sunday, you will hardly wonder if I am not ready to enter into any clerical engagement which may detain me from the long-delayed holiday. As I have no duty at St. Paul's until February, it is likely enough that we will not come to town before January. I can only say that, if then able to preach for any one, I will gladly preach for you. But a man, who has entered his seventy-third year must, on all accounts, be very chary of promises. Ever my dear Mr. Fleming, very truly yours,

HENRY MELVILL

Little evidence remains in Barnes of Melvill's ministry: in the parish church is a modest plaque in memory of his youngest daughter, Edith, who was killed in India; and as the countryside round Barnes built up, Melvill's name was given to a street near the church.[1]

At his bedside when he died, in his official residence at 2 Amen Court, was his friend, Canon Liddon, with whom he had served as a member of the Chapter of St. Paul's. Canon Melvill was a representive of the old regime and Canon Liddon of the new order. It is certain that the "old Cambridge" and "new Oxford" found many points on which they could not agree, yet Melvill said during the course of his last illness, "I have liked and admired many men, but I never loved any man as I do Liddon."[2]

Liddon related to Monier-Williams what a great privilege and benefit it had been to be present at Melvill's death.

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1 City planners might have checked more carefully on the correct spelling of the name of him whom they sought to honour, for today it stands Melville Avenue.

2 J. O. Johnson, Life and Letters of Henry Parry Liddon, p. 151.

"No doubt," Sir William Monier-Williams comments, "he meant to refer to the edifying character of some of Henry Melvill's dying utterances, which unhappily have not been preserved. Indeed, it is to be regretted that no memoir of his life has ever been written, and that the recollection of the unique and impressive personality of one of the greatest preachers our country has ever produced, is, I fear, already passing away. The present generation knows little about it."[1]

Melvill's body lies in the crypt of St. Paul's Cathedral near that of Christopher Wren. Inscribed on the slab are these words:

Beneath this Stone
Repose the Mortal Remains
of
Henry Melvill
Canon Residentiary of this Cathedral
Born 14 September 1798
Died 9 February 1871
He lived the Devoted Minister
of Christ, the Ernest Preacher.
He died Resting all his Hope
on the Assurance of
that Faithful Saying
"Christ Jesus came into the
world to save sinners"

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[1] Memorials, p. 160.

CHAPTER III

Melvill's Theological Thought

The Christian who profits from commerce with the thought of nineteenth century British preachers can hardly fail to appreciate that some men confined their travels to the lowlands of faith; others drifted to and fro on the misty flats; and still others braved the perils of discovering and interpreting a highland faith. The dominant personalities of each group have been investigated; but there always remains the possibility that a voice of the past, long since silenced by death and neglected by historians, should still be heard. Henry Melvill may be one of those forgotten preachers whose grasp of truth was fuller, deeper and more compelling than that of the ordinary run of clergymen.

In studying Melvill's thought, one must begin with the primary source of his convictions. In his Cambridge training as a mathematician he learned the art of applying close logic, but the genius of his thought, though disciplined by logic, is not to be found in a dialectic. He was also a capable historian in both secular and sacred fields, but history does not provide his prime mover. He was well grounded in philosophy, but it is not here that we find the clue to his power as a thoughtful preacher. In order to discover the real, if not the sole source of his power, we must turn first to his thought on the Bible

itself and then attempt to reconstruct its theme as understood and preached by Melvill. The last three sections of this chapter will deal with his thought on the Church, the Sacraments and Worship.

Section I

The Inspiration and Authority of the Bible

Nineteenth century thought on the Bible witnessed a major revolution. Literary and historical critics of the Bible awakened new interest in the Book itself as they plunged into a serious study of its form and of history out of which it grew. Scholarship was called in to show that the scripture writers were not always the "faithful pen in the hand of the Holy Spirit." Where "penmanship" was seen to be obscure, textual critics worked for clarification. Where the meaning of a transcription was enigmatic, research sought to date the passage and look to the historical situation for enlightenment. Preachers in the twentieth century can hardly fail to profit from these labours on the Bible; but men in the nineteenth century were faced with the difficulty of deciding whether higher criticism was a demoniac attempt to destroy the Bible as the infallible basis for faith, or a detergent enriching the understanding of biblical material through scientific investigation. Melvill considered the work of the critics to be an attempt

to undermine the authority of the Bible. In one of his first published sermons he said, "I am persuaded that of all the concessions that can ever be made to cold philosophising infidelity, the most dangerous would be that which would in any degree yield the fact of the plenary Divine inspiration of Holy Writ. The inspiration under which one author wrote, may have differed somewhat from that which guided the compositions of another. . .but just as that was Divine influence which enabled Isaiah, in the dim perspective of future generations, to disclose their coming glories in all the sublimity and pathos of a vividly historic representation--that was equally Divine influence which actuated Ezra, when, with unimpeachable fidelity, he became the annalist of bygone days. Whether prophet or historian, the fact of their inspiration gives us equally strong assurance that whatever Moses related was actual transaction, and whatever John predicted will receive full completion."[1] He also affirmed, "that the scheme of theology must be radically wrong, which feels uneasy in contact with any portion whatsoever of the Bible".[2] Such convictions as these Melvill held throughout his ministry.

Melvill was an earnest student of the Bible, but not a close critic of the verbal refinements of its language.

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1 Melvill, Miscellaneous Sermons, Vol. I, p. 309.

2 Melvill's Sermons Preached During the Latter Years of His Life, Vol. I, p. 276; hereafter cited as Melvill's Sermons: Latter Years.

He did not harp a literalist's "either/or" but always attempted to expound a reasonable argument for Truth, calculated either to inform the mind or assail the conscience. Never did he burden his hearers with any arguments to show that salvation depended upon the literal interpretation of an eis or an ev, or that the central doctrines of the Bible would be materially affected if some ancient manuscript substituted a iva for a oti.

If, as Melvill believed, the whole Bible was written for "our admonition and instruction"[1] what then should be the role of reason in expounding its message. Like Aquinas, Melvill felt that faith should take reason by the hand and lead it along the right way, but many of his contemporaries thought that philosophical acumen had at last come of age and gained the right to throw off the parental reins of theology. Reason sought to push faith along the road toward a religion stripped of the supernatural view of revelation. Here Melvill's attack on reason began. He was never one to disparage reason in itself, but did make clear its limitations. He showed the folly of attributing to it any creative power. His stress lay on the fact that supernatural realities cannot be explained in a natural way; nevertheless, true revelation

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[1] Melvill, Sermons on Certain of the Less Prominent Facts and References in Sacred Story, Vol. I, p. 92. hereafter cited as Melvill, Sermons on Less Prominent Facts.

never contradicts true reason. He believed that every power of reason should be utilized; but if reason were ever to penetrate the divine mystery of revealed religion, it would be able to do so only by the grace of God; for as he put it, "The faculties by which we can investigate truth, and which are spared us for His sake--it is found by experience, that these faculties succeed in detecting truth, only in proportion as they are warmed by the beams of His religion. Therefore, it is Thou, O Christ. . .who hast been the dispenser of Truth--thou alone hast made man acquainted with his Creator."[1]

As might be expected, Melvill's supernatural views of biblical revelation were destined to run into head-on collision with the thought of the rationalists. In a sermon preached shortly before his death, he remarked, "Now the grand attempt of the deist has alsays been to prove all necessity for the one by ascribing great strength and prowess to the other."[2] In one of his first sermons, preached forty years earlier, he expressed the same idea in a more intemperate tone. "It always strikes me as one of the most surprising proofs of the perverseness of imbecility of human reason, that men are ever ready to reject as untrue that which they cannot comprehend; though the fact of their being able to comprehend it would go far towards proving the

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[1] Melvill, Miscellaneous Sermons, Vol. II, pp. 839-840.

[2] Melvill's Sermons: Latter Years, Vol. I, p. 247.

total absence of the truth of the doctrine(i.e., of the Trinity). . .I am well persuaded, that had the Bible revealed nothing concerning Deity but what might be mastered by the powers of the intellect, then men would have made the same use of plainness which they now make of the difficulty."[1] He concluded the sermon with this caustic comment on "the lying systems called rational and philosophical--rational, I will tell you why; simply because they set themselves above reason: and philosophical, I will tell you why; because they fan a meteor and call it a constellation."[2] Melvill felt that reason, uncontrolled by the Holy Spirit, runs riot and the god, Reason, bowing before her own altar, sins against God.

One maxim to which Melvill's thought adhered was that the Spirit who inspired the Scriptures to be written must be employed by those who would understand them. Only as the secret testimony of the Holy Spirit awakens faith is the authority of wisdom of the Scriptures sealed upon the hearts of men. In affirming this classical truth, Melvill followed the line of Christian tradition, but it is interesting to note his application of it. He insisted that it is not the size, scope, nor secret mystery of the Bible which causes men to shy from its searching signi-

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1 Melvill, Miscellaneous Sermons, Vol. I, p. 187.

2 Ibid., p. 193.

ficance. The Bible is small enough for study, having been designed with distinct reference to human capacity, yet its scope is large enough to ensure that, like the bush of Horeb, it is ever unconsumed; also the Bible contains all sufficiency for faith and practice, yet man is prone to argue aginst or ignore its truth. Why is this so? Melvill felt the first reason to be that, "The doctrines of the Scripture present man at once with a portrait of himself, whose accuracy he must be most unwilling to admit. If he receive them as true, he has to regard himself as a depraved and miserable being, void of all goodness, exposed to utter ruin, and possessing nothing to propitiate the God whose anger he has provoked. Heretofore he may have cherished high notions of himself, imagining he was endued with merits and was exercising virtues which would suffice to secure him favour of his Maker. Henceforward, if he admit the truth of the document under debete, there must be an end of all these towering thoughts, and he must be content to sit in the dust, and clothe himself in sackcloth, and acknowledge his heart to be 'deceitful about all things, and desperately wicked'".[1] Secondly, Melvill felt that after exposing his condition, the Bible offers a remedy offensive to man's pride; "for salvation through the righteousness and death of One who was executed as a malefactor, is not a very inviting topic to a man who is

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[1] Melvill, Miscellaneous Sermons, Vol. I, p. 611.

puffed up with thoughts of his own excellence."[1] Thus it is only as the Holy Spirit reveals to man his need and rouses him to receive the remedy offered that the Bible becomes for him the Word of God. Ultimately, then, it is through the power of the Spirit, who directed its writing, that the divine inspiration and authority of the Bible can be understood and accepted.

We conclude that Melvill's views on the Bible as the inspired, infallible work of God were little altered, if at all, by the new methods of biblical research which were introduced and developed in his time; but we see from his sermons that his thought was influenced to this extent: he felt compelled to reaffirm the historic views of Christianity which had stood for so long unquestioned. In so doing, his method rested more firmly on affirmation than on argumentation and his primary concern was for the proclamation of biblical truth, apparently convinced that the inner witness of Truth itself was the conclusive argument for the final authority and divine inspiration of the Bible.

Section II

Prophecy

Melvill held prophecy to be one of the chief evidences of divine revelation. His view coincided with that

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[1] Ibid.

of the Bampton Lecturer who in 1865 said that, "Prophecy is one department of the miraculous".[1] Melvill saw in Old Testament prophecy and in New Testament fulfilment, proof that both testaments belong together and are part and parcel of God' self-disclosure. He thought that the fulfilment of Old Testament prophecy in the events recorded in the New Testament tended to disprove any authorship save the Divine working throughout the whole of the Scriptures. "In reading the Bible,"he said, "I seem always to hear the same voice, whether the prophet is telling me the events that are to transpire in future ages, or the lawgiver is delivering his precepts, or the historians are describing battles, or evangelists describe the institu-tion, and apostles unfold the doctrines of Christianity; I seem always to hear the same voice, so that the words of John in exile in Patmos, were the echo of Moses the deliverer of Israel."[2] This view of prophecy, maintaining the unqualified unity of the Bible and holding the Old Testament to be the organism out of which the New Testament grew, is dominant in his preaching. We must now try to illustrate how his thought was shaped by this idea.

Melvill saw more than deep spiritual analogies in the recorded history of Israel. He believed that the events

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1 J.B. Mosley, Bampton Lectures, 1865, p. 21. as quoted by A. Richardson, Christian Apologetics, p. 176.

2 Melvill, Miscellaneous Sermons, Vol. I, p. 62.

of her life as a nation and the experiences of individuals which made up that nation must be considered as more than mere narratives whose signigicance was confined to a particular historical situation. He considered the events of the Old Testament as oracles of God to be interpreted in the light of New Testament revelation; and he regarded Ole Testament history as a prophetic message pointing to the life of Christ, to the life of the Chruch, to the Parousia, and to the life to come.

Melvill was preaching at the time when modern critical methods of biblical research were being developed and applied to the problem of prophecy. Some believe that the results of their labours have taken the bite from the method of interpretation which Melvill used; and certainly light cast upon some "prophecies" of Daniel or Second Isaiah, for example, disproves the miraculous predictions Melvill attributed to them. Our purpose, however, is not primarily to study Melvill's views on prophecy in the light of modern developments, but to show how he used prophecy in the preaching of the Gospel.

Inherent in the type of exegesis which "reads in" fulfilment, is the danger that the imagination may run riot and result in fanciful interpretation. Melvill possessed an alert imagination and for the most part his penetration into the hidden mysteries reveals a sober and coher-

ent understanding of his responsibility as a preacher and his limitations as an expositor. It is probably to Melvill's credit that we are unable to reconstruct abstract rules which may have guided him in his exposition of prophecy. The working of the Holy Spirit in "opening the Scriptures" is not easily reduced to rules. For the understanding of Melvill's interpretation of prophecy, as of prophecy in general, the guidance of the Spirit is necessary. Notwithstanding some modern opinion to the contrary, abstract rules and dogmatic principles alone will not help much.

The first thing to be noted is that Melvill was aware of the paradox of prophecy. In his last sermon as Golden Lecturer, he made this sweeping statement: "Prophecy however variable, and whatever it s immediate topic, has but one object, that of giving testimony to Christ; and if we were referred to each prophet to find an express prediction accomplished in Christ, we should probably be somewhat at a loss."[1] How did he handle the paradox thus brought into focus? For example: how can the so-called prophetic book of Nahum which opens with a mutilated acrostic poem and closes with a series of oracles against Assyria be considered to bear witness to Christ? And how does the obscure prophecy of Zephaniah with its stress on Scythian peril

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[1] Melvill, The Preacher in Print (Second Series), The Golden Lectures, 1856, No. 2687, p. 222; hereafter cited as Melvill, Golden Lectures.

and its anticipation of the destruction of Nineveh point towards Him? Melvill's method of relating such prophecy to Christ followed these lines: the activities of these empires in some way affected the children of Israel, who from the very beginning of their history as a nation bore testimony to a coming Messiah. As a nation they lived under the government of God. The Jews were upheld by God for the purpose of foretelling to the world that a deliverer was to be born in the fullness of time. The Israelites are to be regarded as the Old Testament representation of Christ's Church. "If this be true," reasons Melvill, "predictions which refer primarily to the destruction of ancient and idolatrous kingdoms belong in their fullness to the final discomfiture of every enemy of Christ's Church, thus, we must be warranted in declaring of the prophets who uttered these predictions that they gave witness to Christ. . . The immediate theme of prophecy may indeed be the siege of a city or the overthrow of a state; but to ourselves, at least, who are privileged with the whole of revelation, it is evident that the besieged city or the overthrown state represents yet mightier conquests and more stupendous victories."[1]

Melvill also viewed Scripture from start to finish as progressively revealing the majesty and might of the Redeemer and prophecy as the backbone of such revelation. An

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[1] Ibid., p. 224.

illustration of this idea is to be seen in a sermon entitled "The First Prophecy", which he preached on the text Genesis 3:15. Immediately after the fall of Adam the first prophecy took the span of time and gathered into a sentence the history of mankind: "And I will put enmity between thee and the woman, and between thy seed and her seed; it shall bruise thy head, and thou shalt bruise his heel." Melvill felt that it was relatively unimportant whether Adam and Eve understood this first prophecy or not, but said, "unto ourselves it is a wonderful passage, spreading itself over the whole of time, and giving outlines of the history of this world from the beginning to the final consummation."[1] He showed that the text contained the prophecy of continuing conflict between good and evil which began when Satan dislocated the divine economy of righteous man. "In this brief and solitary verse," said Melvill, "no man who is familiar with other predictions of Scripture, can fail to find the announcement of those very struggles and conquests which occupy the gorgeous poetry of Isaiah, and crowd the mystic canvas of Daniel and St. John."[2] This conflict between good and evil is the fulfilment of the prophecy in the larger sense; but the prophecy implied more: mankind, having been left more

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1 Melvill, Sermons (New Edition), 1872, Vol. I, p. 5.

2 Ibid., p. 6.

or less to itself, demonstrated that human searching to know the mode of redemption, was futile; not until the Word became flesh in that divine thrust of God into history was the mode of redemption revealed. In the conflict of the cross, this first prophecy was fulfilled by him who "in the death strife of Calvary trod the serpent under foot."[1] Here the prophetic prediction of the text was begun, and will be completely fulfilled when history reaches its culmination in the "new heaven and the new earth" foretold in the Revelation of St. John.

These aspects of Prophecy, as expounded by Melvill, are chiefly didactic and hortatory and indicate that his approach was not meterially affected by the heavy guns of criticism. On the big issues, at least, he avoided haggling over minutiae which would detract from the force of his reasoning. His thought on prophecy in general not only displays suggestive exegetical principles, but develops an argument for and from prophecy which still stands.

The third, and perhaps the most distinctive characteristic of Melvill's thought on prophecy is the emphasis he placed on the typological interpretation of the Old Testament. In our own day with its cry for "realism", many theologians view such interpretations with particular suspicion. They recognize the danger of pressing the type

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[1] Melvill, Golden Lectures, 1856, No. 2687, p. 225.

too far by excursions into the realm of phantasy. Melvill too recognized the danger; but his caution did not result in silence.

The first question here is what are prophetic types? Dr. Otto Piper says, "A type is unique so far as its function as a type is concerned. It is embodied in a divinely wrought event or an inspired person that foreshadows the way God is to act in the New Age."[1] Melvill interpreted "types" in much the same way. "Types", he said, "there were (individuals and nations) and significative ceremonies, and mysterious emblems, but these could not constitute day; at best they were but the twilight which gave promise of a morning."[2] We now give some illustrations of these from his sermons. First, of those persons whom he considered as "typical". Adam, for instance, as the ancestor of mankind, he considered a type of Christ; for as the consequences of sin were continued in all Adam's physical progeny, so the consequence of Christ' resurrection continue in his spiritual progeny; Melvill also considered Isaac an "illustrious type of the Redeemer, presented in sacrifice to God. . . and among the most significant, perhaps and certainly the most affecting parts of the typical transaction, that Isaac was made to carry the wood on which he was to be presented in sacrifice to God. . . to those who knew nothing of the

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1 Class notes on Biblical Theology, Princeton Theological Seminary, 1945.

2 Melvill's Sermons: Latter Years, Vol.I, p. 20.

exact mode in which Christ was to suffer, this might have seemed one of the obscurest portions of the type: how the sacrifice could carry the wood on which he was to die, was a question that could hardly be answered, until it was known that the death would be the death of the Cross."[1]

That Adam and Isaac, thus interpreted as types, can be regarded as pointing toward Christ is obvious; but Melvill does not limit his interpretations to the obvious. He suggests that Jonah's deliverance from the belly of the whale is a type prophecy of Christ's resurrection.[2] "Types were raised," said Melvill, "which foretold the birth of One under strange circumstances and which are seen in the births of Isaac, Samuel, and Samson, all of whom were born "out of the course of nature."[3]

This selection indicates Melvill's method of typological exegesis. He often showed that Old Testament figures considered as types, cast a long shadow of the substance which they represent. He applies the same method to nations. The prophetic message, especially about rebel nations, is prominent in his preaching. He felt that though men in the present may be deaf to the prophetic message of

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1 Melvill, Sermons on Less Prominent Facts, Vol. II, pp. 263-265.

2 Melvill, University Sermons, 1859, p. 79.

3. Melvill, Miscellaneous Sermons, Vol. II, p. 579.

nations, there will come a "day" when "the men of Nineveh will rise up in judgment and condemn us, if we believe not in the Mediator and accept not the deliverance offered in his blood. Nineveh shall witness against us; and Tyre, and Moab, and Babylon will come up from their ruins, and testify how in their overthrow and desolation they gave proof of the truth of revelation, and declared to mankind that Jesus, of whom all the prophets spake, was anointed of God to save the penitent and to crush the disobedient. Prophecy peals from them all with the testimonies of Jesus."[1] Melvill saw a prophetic note in the history of nations, and he stressed most frequently the lessons to be learned from the punishment of rebel nations. Here we see the eschatological note which he considered so effective a motive. He felt the experiences of Old Testament individuals and nations as types may carry little weight in the "here", but when they are called up to bear witness in the "hereafter" their voices shall be heard.

Finally we shall illustrate what Melvill called "significative ceremonies". By this he meant those Jewish customs which may be regarded as "types" of Christian truth. Thus, the Jewish Passover becomes a type of the Christian Eucharist; legalist discipline growing out of the Law of Moses becomes a "type" fulfilled by the love of Christ; and

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[1] Melvill, Golden Lectures, 1856, No. 2687, p. 228.

the temple sacrifice becomes a "type" of the One Sacrifice. Here we deal only with his treatment of Jewish and Christian sacrifices. In a sermon which he preached from the sixteenth chapter of Leviticus, we find a lucid exposition of the problem and a capable handling of the relationship between temple sacrifices and the sacrifice of Christ.[1] His argument begins "on the authority of Scripture" that there does exist here a relationship of type to anti-type; and on this assumtion it becomes a "great point to ascertain the sense in which legal sacrifice took away sins; for , of course, this sense must determine that in which the sacrifice of Christ made atonement for transgressions."[2] The problem itself is vast and detailed, and Melvill's sermon is long and deep, and to summarize is to lose much of the force of his careful development. He began by saying that participants in the Jewish ritual--the people, the priests, and the goats--are to be interpreted symbolically. The sinner is seeking atonement and way of overcoming the consequences of his disturbed relationship with God. This is accomplished through an act of transference. Sin under the law as under the Gospel was "literally transferred from the sinner to the sacrifice." Melvill believed that "The high priest on

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1 Ibid., No 2548, p. 57. It is worth recalling that this was a Tuesday morning "lecture" given in a down town London church before a large congregation of business men, office workers, etc.

2 Ibid.

this solemn occasion was a special type of the Redeemer, for Christ was not only the victim presented in the sacrifice; he was also the priest who presented it; he offered himself." The high priest as a "type" also points to the humiliation of Christ: in the ritual the high priest was divested of the rich robes appropriate to his office, and donned only the garment of the ordinary priest. So too with Christ; he died not clothed in the glory which belonged to him as God, but as man; he exchanged the form of God for the form of man. But only thing of which he could divest himself was the apparent form of God--the outward manifestation of the powers and splendours of the divine nature. The God-man although "clothed" as the ordinary man, remained God, just as the high priest, although clothed as an ordinary priest, remained high priest. Further, the high priest was a "type" in that he entered the holy of holies alone carrying the blood with which to sprinkle the mercy-seat. "Solitary, and with none of the priests even as assistants, he who typified the Messiah, passed into the holiest, and made atonement for himself, his household, and all the congregation; and thus the High Priest of our profession "trod the wine-press alone, and of the people there was to be none.'"

In like manner also, Melvill considered the sin-offering which consisted of two animals, one slain and the other sent into the wilderness. "It was," he said, "naturally to be expected that there would be a weakness and insufficiency

in types, when the object represented was Christ; that they could be made accurate only by being combined. . . creation might pour forth all its imagery, and yet leave the mediatorial work imperfectly protrayed; and the combination of types was indispensable to the completeness of delineation. . . As the first goat was Christ offering himself without spot unto the Father, so the second was Christ 'the resurrection and the life' applying the energies of his death to the removal of the guilt from his people. There is not only forgiveness, there is forgetfulness of our sins--they are carried into the desert and can nowhere be found. Sin forgiven, sin forgotten--these are the things typified by the slaying of one of the goats and the sending of the other into the wilderness; sin forgiven, and sin forgotten--these, blessed be God! are the results obtained for us by the crucifixion and intercession of 'the one Mediator between God and man, the man Christ Jesus'".[1]

Melvill's thought on prophecy revolved around the conviction that the whole of the Bible is grounded upon history, compounded in a unity of time and timelessness. Behind all of biblical history God is speaking, through the experiences of indiviauals and nations, a message of divine reconciliation, undergirded by the movement of God's sovereign purpose. In the Old Testament, the secret of His purpose

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[1] Ibid., p. 63.

is hidden; and for the key to unlock the mystery, Melvill searched in the Scriptures for "types" pointing toward Christ and the Church. Herein his exegetical talents were used to the full and yet he seems to have successfully avoided making the interpretation of prophecy a kind of mental calculus for which no special assistance of the Spirit was required. His thought on prophecy followed the line laid down by the Thirty Nine Articles, but we find that his sermons bear the clear stamp of his own originality and are no rehash of the views of other writers. Where at times his exegesis tended towards the grotesque, he was usually saved from too wild an interpretation by a mind that demanded a reasonable interpretation consistent with the tenor and message of the Bible as a whole. Perhaps he magnified much which in modern perspective takes an inconspicuous place in the background, but he interpreted the significance of prophecy with a vigour designed to meet the attacks of the infidel of his day on a level far above that of the hackneyed proof-text method. He regarded prophecy as an essential part of the proclamation, on which, if rightly understood, there followed a right understanding of the Bible, and of Christ as the fulfilment of the Law and the Prophets.

Section III

Doctrine of God

As Calvin's thought was dominated by the idea of the

sovereignty of God which shaped and coloured his views on the Atonement, the Sacraments, and matters ecclesiastical, so Melvill's master-thought was the crucified Christ; to see the attributes of the Father magnified and displayed, he looked to the Cross of the Son. For Melvill, true knowledge of God comes to the man who sees through the eye of faith what God has done. He felt that speculation on God the creator of nature revealed an ordering supernatural will; conjecture on God as the sustaining power behind natural laws revealed some sort of cosmic life; but real knowledge of the triune God is most fully revealed in his great work of moral renovation. Furthermore, knowledge of God must be ratified by experience. "I must know, experimentally know, that Jesus died for me, before I can know anything of the hatefulness of sin. And when a man is enabled to look by faith to the Lamb of God, bearing his sins in his own body on the tree--and this is to know God in Christ--then alone will he entertain a genuine and heartfelt sorrow for sin."[1] Thus Melvill's thought on the nature of God centres primarily on the work of God, and it is from here that we must proceed in developing this aspect of his theology.

Fundamental to his thought were decided views on the doctrine of the Trinity. Nineteenth century Evangelicals far from being indifferent to this doctrine as unpractical

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[1] Melvill's Sermons: Latter Years, Vol. I, p. 267.

or as merely a starting point for discussing theological trivia, they never tired of insisting that practical religion would bear fruit just in proportion to the clarity of doctrinal belief. Advancing along these lines Melvill insisted that the doctrine of the Trinity is not only practical, but contains the "sum and substance of the Christian faith; so that," he said, "if you could prevail with me to allow this doctrine to be swept out of my creed, I would gladly consent to your taking away everything else; you would have left me with a Christianity without nerves, without muscles, without life; and I can find better religious systems to play with then the carcass before me which you would have me to reverence."[1]

Melvill made the doctrine of the Trinity a preachable one. Recognizing that the doctrine was only implied and not formally enunciated in the New Testament, he stressed the importance of texts which ascribe divine titles and operations to the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit; however, his interpretation of the doctrine rested on more than scriptural proofs, being a thinking as well as a believing man, he affirmed that the doctrine of the Trinity stands on the ground of reason. "The only difficulty," he said, "is keeping reason within bounds, for it is disposed to demand a far greater range than can ever be conceded;"[2] and his appeal for the reasonableness of the

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1 Melvill, Miscellaneous Sermons, Vol. I, p.190.

2 Melvill, Golden Lectures, 1851, No. 1751, p. 885.

spiritual doctine of the Trinity began with the conviction that there is all the difference between what is contrary to reason and what is above reason. "No truth can be contrary to reason, but many a truth may be above reason. . . and we say of this doctrine that it carries nothing on its front to convict it of absurdity--we say of it, that, though the attempt has been made through many centuries, and men of great but misapplied genius have given themselves to the effort, reason has never succeeded in proving it impossible."[1]

Melvill not only affirmed the reasonableness of the doctrine, but maintained that the apparent inferiority of the Second and Third Persons to the First, is removed when the business of human redemption is brought into the picture. Where the Bible speaks of the Three Persons apart from their action for the salvation of the race, he insisted, there is no shadow of inequality, each Person being equally described as Omnipresent, Omniscient, and Omnipotent; when Christ declared, "My Father is greater than I," he spoke as Mediator, as God-man not as God. Christ's reference to the Spirit as one sent implies subordination; but here again the reference is to the Spirit's office, not to his person; he is sent for the purpose of making effectual in the rebel nature of man

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[1] Ibid., pp. 886-887.

the redeeming power unloosed by Christ but not yet applied.[1] Thus, Melvill's conviction was that if a scheme of redemption were devised where the perfect co-equal, co-essential deity of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit were not admitted, "you introduce a worm into the core by denying the Trinity, and in an instant sickness spreads over the whole."[2]

Melvill felt that the doctrine of the Trinity was one to be fearlessly faced and one that could be lucidly preached. A striking paragraph from a sermon preached on Trinity Sunday, crystalizes his thought on the doctrine and illustrates how he presented its truth. "Salvation designed--salvation executed--salvation applied--I call this the Trinity of man's redemption, and over each province there is a presiding Deity--a God to will--a God to work--a God to handle the remedy, and to make use of it for the cure of diseased souls. Here is an unbroken chain between earth and heaven. The office of either person is of equal magnitude and importance with that of the other. But, nevertheless, it is the fact that this Trinity is a Trinity of unity, which gives comfort its strength, and to hope its vigour. When you have rejoiced over, expatiated and meditated on the offices of the various persons in the

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1 Melvill, Golden Lectures, 1856, No. 2589, p. 366.

2 Melvill, Miscellaneous Sermons, Vol. I, p. 192.

Godhead--when you have beheld with wonder, how in every office through which salvation is derived, man's salvation is ordered by the work of absolute Deity; then, is not the crowning point the remembrance that the Three Divine Persons are, after all, only One. . . One in purpose, and One in working; however the Godhead may distribute into different channels the gifts of heavenly loving-kindness, yet these channels must always meet in one and the same soul , assembling into one common centre the blessings which flow from three separate sources."[1]

Melvill's thought on the triune nature of the Godhead was so compounded with his thought on God's action in saving men that he could affirm the former doctrine without dexterous manipulation of abstract ideas, by emphasizing concrete facts and realities in the experience of Christians who have discovered the co-essential part played by each of the Three Persons of the Trinity in revealing the way and assisting in travel on the road.[2] This, of course, does not mean that he attempted to remove the baffling and incomprehensible element in the doctrine; for he readily confessed its mystery and his inability to translate its truth into language.

Melvill regarded the Incarnation, the divinity of its

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[1] Ibid., pp. 192-193.

[2] E.g., see p.

author, as the point on which the system of Christianity stands or falls. This also he considered "A mystery that is proved by revelation and cannot be disproved by human reason."[1] He was emphatic in pointing out the folly of trying to explain that which we are not competent to fathom, but affirms that "The infant. . .born of woman, and having an infant's feebleness and helplessness was actually the Omnipotent God, whose life is eternity and dwelling place infinity. . .was as truly God as though he had not been truly man, and as truly man as though he had not been truly God."[2]

The history of Christian thought clearly shows the danger of placing unbalanced emphasis on either the Divine or the human nature in the person of Christ. On this subject overemphasis on one aspect of Christ's nature cannot be given without doing serious damage to the other. The Gospel Melvill preached is one of power because he proclaimed the Divinity of the Redeemer and also interpreted rightly the function and importance of Christ's humanity. He expressed his conviction in such a phrase as this: "If there must be a terrestial nature to afford succour, there must be a terrestial nature to ensure sympathy."[3]

Even the casual reader of Melvill's published works

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1 Ibid., Vol. II, p. 837.

2 Ibid., p. 836.

3 Ibid., Vol. I, p. 311.

can hardly fail to notice that he speaks most frequently of Christ not as King, not as Lord, nor as Saviour, but as Mediator. In his preaching of this truth we sense his consuming desire to show that the self-disclosure of God, though begun at the moment of creation, was not made articulate until the Word became flesh. In the act of incarnation the Creator spanned the gulf between heaven and earth and in so doing humbled Himself so that He might be known to the creature as the Mediator. "If", Melvill said, "we may venture to compare things, neither of which we can measure, there is something less overwhelming in the fact that the 'Word became flesh', than in the other fact, that 'being formed in the fashion of man, he humbled himself and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross'". So here again Melvill's master-thought emerges as he looks to the Cross of Christ for the supreme revelation of God. His emphasis makes the Crucified One the central point of revelation, and Melvill relentlessly drove in the wedge of His truth that in the tragedy of the Cross the glorious reconciliation was achieved: the Father's wrath was fully satisfied by the Son's sacrifice, man's rebellion was broken as man's attempt for righteousness shifted from the merit resting on self to merit resting solely on Christ. Or as he expressed it, "The more earnestly man gazes, the more he contemplates the dignity and innocence of the Victim, the more he ponders the mystery that a Being, who was

one with the Father, should have been given up to be an execration and a sacrifice--the more disposed will he be to abhor and reproach himself, and the more will he bewail his own guiltiness, which demanded so awful an expiation."[1] Real knowledge of God, as One of wrath and love, and real knowledge of man, in his sin and his sainthood, comes not to the man who sits down to compute by abstract calculation, but to the man who finds himself alone, empty handed, and receptive at the foot of the Cross of Christ, the Mediator, the God-man.

For the part which the Third Person plays in the drama of divine self-disclosure, we shall cite a sermon preached on the text, "Behold my servant, whom I uphold; my elect, in whom my soul delighteth."(Isaiah 42:1) In this Old Testament text Melvill regarded the servant as Christ Jesus, the man, to be understood in his mediatorial capacity. Jesus as man was upheld by the Spirit and preserved sinless in order that he might complete the mediating act which delighted the Father and redeemed man. In refuting the argument of those who supported a doctrine of Christ's fallen humanity, he said, "So far as I can judge, such a view cannot give one new ground of intensity to Christ's sympathy with his people; while on the other hand, it militates against the virtue of the atonement, and shakes

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[1] Melvill's Sermons: Latter Years, Vol. I, pp. 267-268.

to its basis the fabric of Christianity."[1]

Melvill's thought on the nature and work of God was saturated with the message of Calvary. "Certainly the Crucifixion is nothing but a perplexed mystery, the instant we lose sight of Christ--first as man, and therefore able to suffer, and secondly, as God, and therefore able to atone."[2] He saw in this momentous transaction effected by the Mediator to be a sheer gift of Christ's Grace, as is also man's perception and reception of its benefits. He saw too that the mediation of Christ magnified every divine attribute of God. "The Son crucified is most emphatically the Father glorified; Christ obedient, and buffetted and slain for man, is God exalted, and honoured, and vindicated. . .He stood amongst men 'the express image of the Father's person, and he acted and died amongst men, not more as the restorer of fallen creatures, than as the vindicator of the insulted Creator; not more as the deliverer from the miseries of men than as manifestor of the magnificence of God."[3] On the human side of Christ's mediation every need is met; and in holding unequivocally to the substitutionary view of the atonement, Melvill understood

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1 In introducing this sermon which stressed the humanity of Jesus, Melvill remarked: "Now, there is need of much caution, in these factious days, lest by an unguarded expression we lay ourselves open to the charge of entertaining a doctrine to which our souls are utterly abhorent." Miscellaneous Sermons, Vol. I, p. 69.

2 Melvill, Golden Lectures, 1855, No 2459, p. 267.

3 Melvill, Miscellaneous Sermons, Vol. I, p. 72.

Christ's work from beginning to end as carried out under the staggering burden of vicarious suffering. At no moment was there a suspension of the penal requirements. If man's nature was to be changed, he recognized that the Mediator must endure a baptism of suffering and immersion in a deep ocean of trouble; by which he made atonement for every individual, "even the most despised and unknown".

In expounding his views on the doctrine of God, Melvill seems to be attacking two heresies which are always evident and which in his day were becoming increasingly vocal. He opposed the unitarian view of the Godhead by proclaiming the essential work of the Three Persons in the effecting of man's redemption; he sought to give balance to the hyper-humanitarian doctrines concerning Christ by affirming a divine nature so coalesced with the human that the result in Christ was the capacity to suffer and hence to sympathize, to atone and hence, to reconcile.

The significance of Melvill's thought on God is not only to be found in dogma, but also in his witness. "Let others therefore glory in being objects of God's Providence, in being fed by His bounty, guided by His light, curtained by His shadows; let them glory in having been made after His image, endowed with immortality, illuminated by reason--I would not be insensible to these proofs of the love of the Creator; but feeling myself in danger of eternal destruction,

and finding that a sacrifice made on my behalf is such as irresistibly proves that God so loved me as to do every thing for me except to dishonour himself, then shall I not exclaim with the apostle, 'God forbid that I should glory, save in the Cross of Christ!'"[1]

Section IV

Man and His Sin

Those who crowded into Camden Chapel on the morning of April 11, 1850, heard the young minister preach a sermon marking the first anniversary of his pastorate in Camberwell. In the course of the service he said, "I cannot take a single step in explaining--in elucidating-- in preaching the Gospel, unless the corruption of our nature is fully and unequivocally conceded. . . Every attempt to surmount and soften away the harsh and stern doctrine of man's utter degeneracy, is nothing better than a bold effort to bring the scheme of redemption into contempt; and all the prettinesses that are uttered about what is styled good, and virtuous, and amiable, in unregenerate hearts, are but daring invectives against the work and wisdom of the atonement."[2] Nine years later a congregation of Cambridge men heard the same minister as University Preacher for the month of November, 1859, say, "Able was the first of the 'noble army of martyrs,' a martyr

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[1] Ibid., p. 268.

[2] Melvill, Miscellaneous Sermons, Vol. I, p. 416.

when the world seemed too young to furnish a murderer, and when therefore, in dying, he might prove of human depravity, that it asked no time for growth, but was the giant and the infant at once."[1] Three decades later as Melvill's ministry was drawing to a close, this thought is found in one of the last sermons he preached: "With the fall of Adam, was the loss of image wherein he had been made. He could not therefore send down to his children the powers he had received at creation. He could only transmit feebleness and waywardness, a propensity to evil, and an inability of offering unto God any acceptable service."[2]

Three prominent working principles are found in Melvill's thought on man and his sin: first, its emphasis is not considered homiletic appendage, but a fundamental axis around which forty years of preaching revolved; second, man's sin is no superficial blemish but a malignant and total pollution of the body, will, affections and spirit; and third, though all men are born in a state of "lostness" as a consequence of rebellion, all men are equally redeemed to a state of probation. These observations alone do not distinguish Melvill's thought in the nineteenth century but serve to place him in what was the accepted

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1 Melvill, University Sermons, 1839, pp. 23-24

2 Melvill's Sermons: Latter Years, Vol. I, p. 7.

position of the early Evangelicals.[1] It is, however, significant that his thought on the doctrine of man remained unmodified in essence and emphasis even in the period after 1840, when evolutionary optimism was in the ascendance and biblical critcism was raising serious questions about the historical validity of such literal and sweeping interpretations as the early Evangelicals gave to the doctrine of the fall.

Study of Melvill's thought on this subject is simplified somewhat because there is little evidence in his sermons of oscillation or accommodation to the new trends which were being accepted by so many of his contemporaries. A notable characterishic of Melvill's preaching is that he was always far more concerned with what God had to say through the Bible than with what men were saying about that message.

As we proceed to study the doctrine in more detail as Melvill preached it, it will be seen that although sin drags man down into abysmal depths, Melvill affirms that, "Man was not made to grovel in the dust!"[2] He says this with strong conviction, because he is certain that though

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[1] V.F. Storr observes that in almost all the sermons of the Evangelicals, two beliefs are fundamental: "The assertion of the depravity of human nature as the ground and occasion of Christ's redemptive work. . .(and) The bright complement to this dark picture, stands the cross of Christ, conceived as the ground of God's forgiveness, and the only hope of the sinner." The Development of English Theology in the 19th Century, pp.67-68.

[2] Melvill, Golden Lectures, 1855, No. 2459, p. 270.

an heir of Adam's fallen nature, every man is also a redeemed man. Furthermore, we shall see that he assumes that "Redeemed man. . . is better off than the unfallen."[1] In order to grasp the importance of this pivotal postulate in Melvill's thought, it is necessary to trace the steps by which he arrives at it. Beginning with his thought on the origin of evil and Satan's subsequent attack on Adam, we shall then consider the effects of the Fall as it relates to man.

In his old age, Melvill confessed that the preacher's efforts are better employed endeavouring to remove evil out of the world, than attempting to explain how it came into the world,[2] yet in his earlier ministry he ventured some speculation on the latter problem. He regarded the avenue of sin's entrance into this world as obvious. Satan, employing his powers of seduction, successfully tempted mankind's first parent, with the result that Adam and his heirs all lost their power to be obedient and "right with God". The real mystery of sin is not to be found in its origin and transmission in this world, but rather in its previous existence. "It is not very wonderful that man should fall, when there was a devil to tempt him; the wonder is that there should have been a tempter."[3] Thus the real problem lies behind the veil in that period of

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1 Melvill, Miscellaneous Sermons, Vol. I, p. 36.

2 Melvill's Sermons: Latter Years, Vol. I, p. 18.

3 Melvill, Miscellaneous Sermons, Vol. II, p. 714.

history on which Scripture is silent. However, Melvill argues that the origin of evil can be explained by a process analogous to that by which can be proved the existence of God, i.e. reasoning back to the origin of created things until at length an uncreated cause must be admitted. "By proceeding from one order of being to another(which includes angels), sooner or later we must come to a point at which evil commences spontaneously--at which it originates itself, for there is no way of explaining how under the economy of God any creature can be made sinful, except by allowing that some creature made himself sinful."[1]

We sense some reluctance in Melvill to probe into the mystery of sin's origin, but his inquiring mind often slipped over the bounds of explicit biblical fact and wove a kind of Miltonian conjecture into the fabric of his theology. His belief not only in the existence but in the ministry of angels began with the supposition that "evil originated spontaneously in the breast of one of the highest created intelligences." Had more of the history of certain angels been revealed, many problems which now perplex students of Scripture would be answered. This much is known, says Melvill: after succumbing to the shock of temptation, Satan rallied around him supporters from the angelic host, who, after their unsuccessful "war in heaven" (Rev. 12:7) with Michael and his angels, were cast out of

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[1] Ibid., p. 715.

heaven.and left to inhabit the yet "unsullied creation" where they are still bending every effort to thwart the purposes of God which they had in vain fought against in heaven.[1] The importance of this for man is that although God has made no provision for the redemption of the angelic beings in whom evil originated, He has provided for the redemption of the lower order of beings, i.e. man, which has suffered as a result of the first rebellion. Against this background first emerges the theme, "It is better to have been redeemed than never to have fallen."[2] Fallen angels, though of a higher order of being than man, are lost for good. They receive no mercy. But fallen man, though lost, has by the grace of God a chance to be saved. Melvill rejects as untenable the view that had Adam remained faithful, everyman would have been certain of reaching heaven. He argued that what man lost was the power and opportunity of securing "blessed immortality." Had he not lost this as a result of his first parent's disobedience, every son of Adam would have been required to earn entrance to heaven by his own obedience, and Melvill reasons, it would be utterly presumptuous to think that on his own, man could have resisted the wiles of the devil any more successfully than Adam did.

Brunner reminds us that the "theme of the Bible is not

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[1] Ibid., p. 716.

[2] Ibid., p. 717.

the historical origin of sin, but the universal and irresistable power of sin as affecting man's being;"[1] and although we have begun by mentioning Melvill's thought on the origin of sin, it must be said that his treatment of this aspect of sin is held soberly in check, and that his great stress is where Brunner says that it should be--on the power of sin. A favourite thought of Melvill's is an often repeated variation on the theme that "Sin was never an infant; it was a giant in the very birth."[2] Adam's fall was not a slow slide down the slope. We are not to think that human nature became "to a certain extent" evil and gradual deterioration finally resulted in man's reaching the very nadir of depravity. No! says Melvill; for with Adam's thrust for independence of God's will, he and all those born "in Adam" instantly became capable of every crime and every atrocity which can now be committed in the "old age of the world".[3] The entrance of sin into this world was sudden and its consequences wove mankind into a kind of solidarity from which no man can claim exemption. "Sin by generating selfishness, dissolved at once the principle of brotherhood, and caused men to split themselves into fractions, to the utter destroying of primeval unity."[4] Thus the order of God's

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1 E. Brunner, Man in Revolt, translated by Olive Wyon, p. 120 in footnote.

2 Melvill's Sermons: Latter Years, Vol. I, p. 39.

3 Ibid., p. 38.

4 Melvill, Miscellaneous Sermons, Vol. II, p. 675.

design was destroyed the moment sin entered the human race: it is not God who destroys; man "in sin" destroys himself.

Another important element in Melvill's thinking is the gravity of sin. That sin has produced a fatal warp in man's nature and outlook is a conviction which coloured the thought of almost every sermon Melvill preached. There was burned into his message the belief that until man felt the awful gravity of sin, the eye of faith was blind to the radical action of the cross which sin provoked of God. An example taken from a sermon he preached on Matthew 12:36,37 serves to illustrate his view on the gravity of sin. The text states that men shall be held accountable in the hereafter for their "idle words". Melvill points out that the majority would recoil from this statement and object that, if idle words are a sin at all, they are "too insignificant to be remembered at a moment when the vast things of eternity shall be waiding the allotment of the Judge."[1] Though readily admitting that sins may be compared, he strikes at the heart of reasoning which, though generally accepted, is fallacious. "It cannot be a small thing to disobey God, though it may be a small thing in which we disobey Him."[2] What Melvill does is to alter the

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1 Melvill, University Sermons, 1839, p. 3.

2 Ibid., p. 4.

perspective and place the emphasis where it should be placed--on God! For only as the gravity of sin is estimated by the greatness of the Being whom we disobey--and not the particular in which we disobey--will the very nature of sin exclude the inconsiderable. Sin, thus considered, finds man in an exceedingly precarious, yea, hopeless condition; for none can hope for salvation when even such moral minutiae as idle words are grounds for condemnation. Such is the gravity of sin against God!

If all men are thus condemned, who is responsible? "Some men," says Melvill, "rail at the devil just in order to apologize for themselves. They say that if man perish, his perdition is the work of the devil."[1] His answer to that brand of excuse is that though Satan tempts, it is man who yields. To those who would excuse themselves on the ground of Calvin's pitiless logic on the sovereignty of God's foreknowledge, Melvill replies, "God may be as certain of our going down finally into the pit, as though we had already been thrown to destruction. . .(but) It is not God's foreknowledge, it is only my own wilfulness which makes the impossibility. I am not hampered, I am not shackled, by God's foreknowledge: I am every jot as free as though there were no foreknowledge. And thus without searching into secret things which belong only to God,

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[1] Melvill, Miscellaneous Sermons, Vol. I, p. 37.

and yet maintaining in all their integrity the Divine attributes, we can apply to every one who goes down in impenitence, the touching remonstrance of Christ, 'How often would I have gathered thee under my wings, and thou wouldest not!'"[1]

Here, then, we have brought into focus another of Melvill's working hypotheses: man himself is ultimately responsible for his "lostness". Though Satan with a diabolic ministry of sin launches his powerful attack, and God knows with unfailing accuracy what the response of each man will be to His offer of salvation, man can point no finger for the final responsibility at either Satan or God. From beginning to end in his preaching on the doctrine, Melvill emphasizes that man is a fully responsible creature, free to chose. His decision "on Christ" made while a probationer in this life will wholly determine issues reaching out into eternity. In all his ministry Melvill saw this one fact standing, stern and challenging--the eternal destiny of the soul to whom he preached the Gospel, was not determined by any moral standards of good or evil conduct, but solely on the individual's free choice between Christ or chaos. As he was aware of this supreme challenge in preparing his message each week, it is understandable why there is conspicuously absent from his sermons any "existential"

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[1] Melvill, University Sermons, 1857, p. 117.

concern for some of the burning issues of his day such as beautifying the service of worship, wearing the surplice, reviving religious art, and a veneration for antiquity. Strong feeling on external issues such as these possessed tne thought and preaching of many of his contemporaries both in the Established Church and outside it. It is hard to believe that Melvill had no definite views on such subjects, but he must have considered them peripheral; for he saw his task as a minister, almost to the exclusion of all else, as that of making the Gospel more articulate and then directing that message to the head and heart of his hearer so that it might influence the decision which the individual must make. Herein, perhaps, is revealed both strength and weakness in his thought, but Melvill's passion for the lost soul of man always stood first. We see in his sermons that week after week, his unrelenting message stressed the power and gravity of sin and man's responsibility for its unchecked hold on his life. If we were to stop at Melvill's insistent hammering on all aspects of man's fallen nature, we might well imagine that he ranked near the top of the list of nineteenth century bores, and find it hard to believe that he was one of the most popular preachers of the century. This can be understood only if we illustrate how he showed to fallen man that the Gospel is "good news".

In expounding Melvill's thought on the doctrine of man, it is difficult to distinguish with accuracy the line separating his theology from his homiletical method, for each was the servant of the other. However, this chapter is concerned with his theology. We have proposed to show that in spite of the solidarity, power and gravity of sin, Melvill considered Christ's work of redemption every bit as large as the effects of rebellion. Superficial reasoning, he insists, will lead to the conclusion that Christ's work was for a lost cause: on every hand there is evidence of sin abounding. "What is wonderful in the Bible appears not wonderful to the natural man."[1] "When large masses of the human population live and die in utter ignorance of Christ," he asks, "how are they better off for redemption?"[2] Melvill faces up to the apparent contradiction in this way: "Appearances," he says, "are not to be taken as proofs; we must search below the surface of things, ere we can discover and comprehend the work of mediation."[3]

In insisting that a man may reach heaven without knowing himself to be "elected", but that he cannot take a single step without knowing himself redeemed, Melvill places not only the work of redemption but the knowledge of that redemption at the centre of Christianity.[4]

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1 Melvill, Miscellaneous Sermons, Vol. I, p. 4: this idea is the theme of the entire sermon.

2 Melvill's Sermons: Latter Years, Vol. I, p. 4.

3 Ibid.

4 Ibid., p. 11.

He believed that Christ died not only for the "elect" but for all men including the "Laplander in the snows and the Arab in the desert." Melvill considers that unless atonement was made for all the sin of all people in the world, the message of the Bible is not a promise but a fraud. What did Christ's work of redemption do for all men? Through Christ's death for the sin of the world, mankind was transferred from a status which called for certain condemnation to a status of probation. Believers and non-believers, the instructed and the ignorant, the good and the bad have all benefited to the extent that they are probationers with the capability of being saved. No man is earth-bound or destined to hell by any decree, divine or diabolic. What then can be said in favour of this new status of probation? Would "Paradise" be preferable to probation? Melvill thinks not. "Would I be what Adam was," he asks, "rather than what I am, when the thing to be considered is the nearness in which I stand to everlasting life? In other and simpler words, do I feel that it would have been easier for me to have been placed in Paradise, dependent on my own powers of obedience, than it is now that I stand in a polluted creation with God's own Son as my Surety and Advocate?"[1] The real question is raised and answered in Melvill's confession of faith: "As a believer in Christ, I

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[1] Ibid.

am unspeakably more sure of heaven, than had I been created in uprightness, and then left to determine by my own strivings my everlasting position."[1] We see now how Melvill arrives at the conviction that, "The redeemed man. . . is better off than the unfallen." Were every individual of the human race required to stand or fall on the merits of his own obedience, he would be in inestimably worse condition than he is now; for the Lamb of God laid down His life for the whole human race and bestowed upon all the right of salvation--not to be earned as a result of man's merit or obedience, but received as a gift from God on the sole basis of Christ's merit and obedience.

The onus for the redemption and salvation of man was in a bold stroke of the Divine shifted from the merit of man to the merit of Christ through His atoning death for all men. Melvill's thought plunges below the surface for evidence that man is in a "favourable position" even with his stake firmly grounded in fallen nature. The unconverted man may view the world and find little evidence that Christ's work of redemption has made headway in overcoming the flagrant and universal results of rebellion; but the believer who has been awakened by the Holy Spirit, whose soul has been evangelized and mind enlarged, whose Christianity is no longer a loose-fitting garment of

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1 Ibid.

formalism but a consuming faith that has been fired, he will testify with certainty that it is far better to be redeemed than unfallen. The converted man, when lost powers have been restored, blind prejudices removed, and the bias of the will turned, will know that in Christ a power has been unloosed for surpassing the power for evil which was introduced as a consequence of rebellion.

Thus, converting knowledge of the Redeemer will produce an awareness of the overwhelming power and love of God. This knowledge will make man aware of his faltering limitations and sin; further, says Melvill, "You cannot know yourself redeemed by the blood of the Mediator, you cannot feel yourself united by faith to him who bore your sins in his own body on the tree, and not be conscious of a vehement desire to crucify in yourself that sin which crucified the Saviour. . . Partial discomfitures there will be, and partial relapses; but oh, success is the invariable issue of the good fight of faith; and the spiritual warrior, if not always a conqueror, is never absolutely prisoner."[1]

As we look back over the road Melvill traveled in his thought on the doctrine of man and his sin, we see that his treatment of the scriptural truth was objective enough to present man's utter degeneracy and "lostness" in bold relief.

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[1] Melvill, Miscellaneous Sermons, Vol. I, p. 157.

To study the Bible objectively as one might investigate chemistry, physics or philosophy is not enough. Eye-opening, soul-saving, and transforming faith places man in a position where objective analysis gives way before Truth that must be proclaimed on the basis of personal knowledge of the intended nature of man, i. e. the "new man in Christ". The true nature of man and the saturating severity of sin--according to Melvill, if we have understood his thought correctly--can only be comprehended by one who has been "gifted" with humility, he must confess from the heart that he is unclean and undone; and "gifted" with a willingness to submit the understanding to God, for much must be received that cannot be explained.[1] The discovery of man's depravity opens the way for the greater discovery--God's plan for redemption; in it is to be found the striking complement of hope to the picture which appears and <u>is</u> hopeless until the grace of God reveals the phenomena of contradiction between what man is "in Adam" and what he can be "in Christ". All men, whether they know it or not, have been the objects of Christ's ministry of reconciliation, and every man to whom the reconciliation is made real by the awakening power of the Spirit, finds his fallen nature restored in God. Though the discovery may be instantaneous, Melvill regards conversion as a process demanding vigorous exertions through

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[1] Melvill, <u>Miscellaneous Sermons</u>, Vol. II, p. 612.

the whole of life. Man is elected not only to an end, but to means--faith sanctification, and obedience--with the result that Christ's religion becomes not a soporific but a stimulus.

When we turn to Melvill's thought on "last things", we shall see that man and his sin are not left to dangle in a state of endless uncertainty. The christian need not die without certain knowledge that the picture of victory begun in this life, yet marred by mistakes, disfigured by the elements and seemingly forgotten and left to rot in oblivion, will be revived and beautifully completed in the life to come. In one of his sermons, the profundity of the theologian melts in favour of the appeals of the sinner, "Even so come, Lord Jesus".

Section V.

Eschatology

In any age of secular positivism, thought on such subjects as the Parousia, the resurrection of the body, life after death, final judgment, and heaven and hell is considered by many to be beyond the beat of the preacher. Yet, the pendulum of Christian concern for "last things" never hangs motionless. So long as men are mortal, and so long as saints suffer and scoundrels succeed in this life, thought will inevitably turn to the next life. In reconstructing the working of Melvill's mind on these matters,

the first problem is to discover its position in eschatological thought during the period of his ministry.

The early nineteenth century saw the Deists continuing their attack on the supernatural element in the Bible. In most quarters, rationalism was attempting to remove the bite from the Gospel of ultimate Christ-centred revolution. The majority of Protestant thinkers had either been weaned from or had never seriously approached the biblical emphasis on the finality of the "day of judgment", but a significant exception to the temper of the times was to be found in the small group of Evangelicals who gave vigorous utterance to a well-defined doctrine of "last things", and used the certainty of future retribution in the economy of God, and the dread of eternal punishment as powerful instruments for the conversion of souls. Melvill's eschatological emphasis may be considered typical of the group to which he belonged in thought but which could claim little of his loyality as a "party man".

Melvill affirms "the whole of the Bible is our witness that such a day(when the 'kingdoms of the world' shall 'become the kingdom of our Lord and His Christ') will yet dawn."[1] Around this theological conviction, much of Melvill's thought revolves. His application of eschatological truth forms a nigh-light in his thought. Through-

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[1] Melvill's Sermons: Latter Years, Vol. I, p. 31.

out his preaching ministry, there runs the unmistakable and unrelenting refrain that man cannot live sensibly and significantly in the presnet unless he knows whence he came and whither he is going. In other words, every thread in the fabric of man's present existence is coloured by his membership in the fallen race of Adam, and his future existence is inescapably bound up with the events accompanying Christ's Second Advent and the ensuing "day of judgment".

The fact of universal judgment by Christ being admitted the question of his thougnt on the timing and execution of the great assize arises. What are the principles on which judgment will be made? Who will be involved and what will be the outcome of the trial?

Kelvill's method of handling these difficult questions is that of presenting his understanding of biblical truth in solution rather than garbed in the cloak of controversy. If in his own mind a battle was fought over the principles of eschatological truth, the complex issues were resolved in his study, for his sermons reveal a minimum of polemical probing merely for the sake of plausibility.

First then, what was his thought on the Second Advent itself? He mentions without dwelling ad nauseam upon the conditons in the world which must precede the Parousia. His congregation often heard him launch forth in passionate bursts of oratory depicting the scene at our Lord's descent.

he felt that it was unnecessary to quibble whether the comming of Christ would be a "personal coming or a figurative coming, such as the overthrow of Jerusalem."[1] Whether personal or figurative, it was represented as accompanied by radical alteration of things which have been assumed permanently fixed--the heavens will be dissolved, the earth shaken, and the dead raised. Christ will come when mankind has almost dispaired of God's redeeming purpose ever being accomplished. Melvill recognized that every generation can interpret the anti-Christian conditions in its own day as signs of His coming and the end of the world; but, "whether or not there be a likelihood that any amongst ourselves will be living on the earth at this coming of Christ we presume not to inquire, much less decide."[2] The crutial concern of the Christian should be readiness!

Melvill's emphasis on Christ's Second Coming was placed upon its awful certainty, not upon the date. Further, the preaching value of the doctrine is shown in many of his sermons and it is introduced as a fervid warning in the conclusion, where Melvill so often describes in the most vivid imagery at his command the terrors of the future world so as to rouse the imagination with "dread of the wrath of the Lamb. . .(and) produce desire for his

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[1] Melvill, Miscellaneous Sermons, Vol. I, p. 128.

[2] Ibid., p. 135.

favour."[1] The modern reader, enlightened by the psychologists' warning on the folly or employing fear as a motive, may question Melvill's approach; but he preached before such warnings were voiced and we suspect that even if he had known, his emphasis on the biblical ideas and imagery of "last things" would have been little altered. He has said that in these matters of final judgment, the preacher is dealing with incredibly "stubborn soil" in the heart of man; and, for that reason alone he is justified, yea, under God he is impelled, to be bold in affirming the certainty of the coming judgment from which no man who ever lived shall be exempt.

Turning to examine the more prominent features of the great assize, we find certain aspects of his vision clear, but narrow and intense. Coupled with his conviction on the certainty of Christ's Second Advent is the idea of the resurrection body reunited with the imperishable soul of man. "We are accustomed," he says, "to think there is an affinity between God and our souls, but nothing of the kind between God and our bodies."[2] He frankly confesses that without a revelation, the resurrection of the body "utterly confounds and overburdens the mind," but every man when summoned back to God shall live again in that identical body which the spirit abandoned.[3] This suggests a thought

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1 Melvill, Sermons on Less Prominent Facts, Vol. II, p. 352.
2 Melvill, University Sermons, 1857, p. 62.
3 Ibid., p. 70.

often stressed by Melvill: man is only partially rewarded during this life; after death and the passing of the soul into the intermediate state, this partial compensation continues as the soul rests peacefully in anticipation, or frets tormented by the thought of the full and final judgment after Christ's Advent and the subsequent recloth-ing of the soul in the resurrection body.

Before developing Melvill's theory of the resurrection of the body, mention should be made of his interpretation on the expression "day of judgment". His appeal is that we approach and examine the Bible "without any apparatus of our nursery recollections."[1] "I think," says Melvill, "there are few so wedded to their school-boy vocabularies as to imagine that the day of judgment is just to compre-hend the same brief interval--neither more nor less--that now elapses between two successive risings of the sun. It is more consistent with Scripture to imagine that the whole millennial period, from the scene that introduces it to the scene that closes it, should be called the day of judgment, than to affix to the appellation some definite interval--we know not whether a day, or a week, or a month."[2]

Following then his assumption that the "day of judgment" covers the whole of the millennial period, we can better

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[1] Melvill, Miscellaneous Sermons, vol. I, p. 347.

[2] Ibid., p. 346.

understand his thought on the resurrection of the body. He adheres to the theory of two resurrections. The first is to include all the righteous of every generation immediately upon Christ's Second Advent. Following this reunion, the second resurrection, stretching over the millennial period, will see the body and soul of all classes of the unrighteous reunited and judged before the "great white throne."

As Melvill's thinking on the Advent panorama comes more into focus, we see the inexorable principles on which this judgment by the Mediator is to be made. At His coming, the righteous of every generation will be raised and their resurrection bodies tenanted and vivified by the Holy Spirit, and they will "mount upward and onward, and sit down on the right hand and on the left."[1] At that moment, the righteous will face judgment--not judgment and trial but judgment and acquittal; for, Melvill affirms without qualification, in this life man is justified by faith; in the life to come the redeemed and justified man has only to await acquittal. At the first resurrection, there will be "acquittal not so much of the soul as acquittal of the body; the soul having been long ago justified by faith, but the body being claimed as the bondslave of corruption."[2]

Thus Melvill's theory squares with Paul's description

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[1] Melvill, Miscellaneous Sermons, Vol. I, p. 549.

[2] Ibid.

of those that sleep in Christ, and the saints that shall be alive at His coming, as caught up to meet the Lord in the air and be with Him forever. Further, the theory of two resurrections enables Melvill to approach with what he considers a novel interpretation,[1] that section in Matthew 25 over which gallons of ink have been poured in an attempt to settle the dust raised by generations of Christian inquiry.

Preaching on the text, Matthew 25:31, 32, Melvill raises the question, to whom does the expression "all nations" refer? In this delineation of the judgment scene, Jesus explicitly states that there will be a separation of the "sheep from the goats"; but, argues Melvill, it is essential to a right understanding of the text in it context not to regard this as a referring to the General Judgment of all the living and dead, but as one link in the chain of events surrounding the judgment. On exegetical grounds where parallel readings of πάντα τὰ ἔθνη are more clear, he rejects the interpretation that by "all nations" Jesus included the dead as well as the living; and affirms that the passage does not refer to Christians at all, but to the heathen who are living at

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[1] Of his exegesis, Melvill said, "When a man and more especially a young man, brings forward an interpretation of Scripture differing from that which commentators and preachers have generally advanced, it is easy to treat his arguments with a sneer and resolve them into the rashness of conceit or inexperience; but again let me suggest that denial is not the answer; and that of all logic, flat contradiction is by far the most illogical." Miscellaneous Sermons, Vol. I, p. 335.

the time of the Second Advent. Later in Matthew 25, Jesus intimates that inheritance of the Kingdom depends on the feeding, clothing, and visiting of "His brethren". Melvill reasons that it is inconsistent with Scripture and common sense to believe that the Christian should ever "profess ignorance of having fed, and having clothed Christ."[1] It is erroneous to suppose that the true believer here can possibly be ignorant in the hereafter. Melvill reinforces his contention by citing Paul's question, "Do ye not know that the saints shall judge the world?" How, he asks, are we to suppose that the saints are to be included in this judgment of "all nations" and at one and the same time participate in the act of judging the world? Thus Melvill regards this picture of the judgment in Mattnew as referring tothe judgment and trial of the heathen, which will follow the resurrection and acquittal of the righteous.

We can now turn to his thought on the second resurrection. In the action of the Mediator-Judge is to be seen impeccable fairness and mercy, but in addition, divine justice will sound an awful note of vengeance; there will be a literal accomplishment of Daniel's vision: Christ will dash into pieces every anti-Christian power and through direct intervention will control all government. The King having established his undisputed dominion, the ungodly will be

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[1] Ibid., p. 356.

raised and tried. Unlike the godly whose judgment was that of acquittal, the unrighteous will be raised, given their resurrection bodies and made to stand trial before the Judge and all the assembled saints of the first resurrection. The great book will be opened which contains an accurate register of their human actions, and on this evidence and the witness of the saints, the fate of the unrighteous will be fixed for eternity. At this point, Melvill is respectfully silent on the lot of those who may be judged "acceptable" on the basis of works, or because they never had an opportunity to hear the Gospel. He leaves unsaid what conjecture is apt to infer. Clinging tenaciously to a doctrine of justification by faith alone, he leaves the paradox of Christ's judgment of the "questionables" to speak for itself.

After the first and second resurrections, all rational beings who ever lived are brought together for the final act of judgment. Assembled by the omnipotent, omnipresent Creator, the whole universe will stand and proclaim God equally just in glorifying the righteous and in condemning the unrighteous; the justice of God will be fully vindicated, the discrepancies of time adjusted for eternity, and the reprobate will go to hell and the ransomed to their thrones.

There remains but one other aspect of the judgment to be mentioned: Melvill's thought on heaven and hell. A writer in the Weekly News and Chronicle says of Melvill: "His heaven has golden pavement, and shining thrones. . .

His hell is physical not mental. It is a bottomless pit where the smoke of their torment ascends--where the worm never dies--where the fire is not quenched."[1] This evaluation, although somewhat over simplified and dramatized, contains more truth than fiction. It is impossible to decide what he takes to be imagery and what he interprets literally; however, "Between heaven and hell," he says, "a great gulf if fixed--heaven cannot dwindle away into hell, and hell cannot be softened away into heaven."[2]

Either heaven or hell is the destined resting place of each individual for eternity. What is the avenue of approach? When a man dies, his soul is disembodied--"a condition we can scarcely imagine," but, says Melvill, "of this we may be sure, that the soul of the righteous man is happy as soon as it leaves the body--the soul of the unrighteous man is miserable; though probably, the happiness is that of expectation rather than fruition--the misery, that of foreboding, rather than torment."[3] Thus at death, the disembodied soul passes into the intermediate state, where it remains, tasting of what is to come. In this intermediate state, Melvill supposes the condition of the soul to be that of deep tranquillity or fierce agitation. The heaven-bound are resting delightfully on the persuasion that the warfare is over and the

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1 The Weekly New Chronicle, undated clipping.

2 Melvill, University Sermons, 1857, p. 76.

3 Melvill, Golden Lectures, 1853, No 2032, p. 572.

crown secured. The hell-bent are tossed and driven by the fearful conviction that the day of grace is passed, and that nothing can avert an eternity of torment.

The modern reader may be tempted to question the relevance of all Melvill's laboured reflection on the subject of "last things". Might not he be accused of making much ado about nothing and perhaps be guilty of travelling in thought beyond what is necessary or expedient. The clue to Melvill's elaborate handling of the subject if probably to be found in the fact that he felt compelled to refute the notion that salvation is in any respect earned through good works. Though he preached vigorously a doctrine of justification by faith, the fact that he was one of London's most popular and effective pleaders for funds for societies and charities provides telling avidence of his stress on good works. It will be shown in Chapter Five how eschatological thought was ingrained in his preaching on behalf of special causes: there we shall see works interpreted as the acid test of a real faith in Christ, for "Faith cannot be and never is a barren or uninfluential principle. . (and) We must conclude that all right faith is wanting, where it does not influence the actions."[1]

Another factor the modern reader must take into con-

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[1] Melvill, Miscellaneous Sermons, Vol. II, p. 614.

sideration when assessing Melvill's thought on eschatology is this: in his day the adherents of a system of natural theology were pressing their thought along the lines of salvation by works, and were finding scriptural authority for their views by interpreting such passages as Matthew 25:31-46 as referring to the ultimate standards by which Christians will be justified. We have seen Melvill's interpretation of this passage, and in other connections he shows firm conviction that this life is the seedtime for eternity, and that the harvest in heaven or hell will be determined by faith in Christ manifested here and now. Works will be judged as satisfactor y provided the motive behind them is love and gratitude for what has been done by the Mediator on behalf of fallen mankind. Reasoning along these lines Melvill is able to penetrate far deeper into the problem than did the circumscribed thought of his contemporary natural theologian.

Furthermore, he dealt freely with the Second Coming because, "proscribed as it is in the sermons of the timid clergy, of all other doctrines it is the most awakening to the soul."[1] It is not enough , he insists, to preach the certainty of death and the necessity of preparing for the approach of the destroyer; "The coffin, of all preachers, is the least arousing."[2] It was not the certainty of death

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[1] Ibid., Vol. I, p. 352.

[2] Ibid.

that the apostles preached, but the certainty of the coming of the Son of Man. This was the theme with which they animated the painting. Melvill's preaching echoes this apostolic emphasis.

Section VI

The Church

Thus far in our investigation of Melvill's thought scant mention has been made of his emphasis on the doctrine of the church; from what has been said, it might be inferred that his passion for the individual soul eclipsed the corporate aspects of religion. In a sense this was so. Even if he failed to lay adequate stress upon the various implications of militant churchmanship for the individual, we must concede that he was far from indifferent to the nature and mission of the Church as an institution.

One disadvantage of expounding Christian doctrine section by section is that we are often compelled to consider separately truths which ought to be taken together. I am particularly conscious of this difficulty in attempting to set forth Melvill's thought on the Church and in the stand he made against the Romeward movement within the Church of England. We see his churchmanship clearly defined, but it has seemed advisable to pass over his protests against the claims of the Roman Church and to deal with this in Chapter Five where we investigate the impact

he made on his times.

We must remember that in the first half of the nineteenth century thought on the Church was a live issue, not only for the theologian but for the politician and for the so-called man in the street. It is a truism that the Church has never transcended her necessarily profane character; and the shortcommings of what she is, compared with what she professes to be provided the spectator with ample grounds for cavil, derision and dissent. During the period in question the Church of England felt all these blows directed against her with unprecedented fury; Newman, three years Melvill's junior, was brought to his knees as a heretic, convinced that his beloved Church of England was in schism; voices were raised in both Houses of Parliament[1] saying that the Church must either reform or expect to lose her national charter. Many laymen were disgusted with the Established Church as an institution because they saw it as the reflected image of the majority of the clergy who ranged anywhere from worldly, hail-fellow-well-met characters to rank, immoral robbers. In any history of the period, whether written as a handy "pocket edition" or in voluminous detail for the scholar, there is to be found abundant evidence that the Chruch was the subject of both serious and superficial thought. For our purposes it is unnecessary to indicate

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[1] See, e.g., The Christian Remembrancer, 1841, pp. 422-423.

any more than has been done the corruption within and the criticisms from without which made the status of the Church a burning question.

If our knowledge of the period came only from Melvill's preaching, we should sense little of the tumult and learn few of the facts. Except for a few scattered sermons, he ignored what was evil within his Church in an attempt to set forth what was good. We shall consider his thought on the nature of the church, first, and secondly, the mission of the church.

For Melvill, the church was no amorphous, vaguely defined body, a haphazard collection of individuals accidently, temporarily and loosely associated by reasons of common beliefs or sympathies. His sermons supply three tests of whether a group can be regarded as part of the Church: (1) Can the ordination of her ministers be traced back to the commission Christ gave to his apostles? (2) Is the pure gospel preached? (3) Are the sacraments rightly administered? Melvill believed that in doctrine and practice the Church of England satisfied these fundamental criteria. In those comparatively few sermons where the Anglican churchman forges into prominence, we find his position made unmistakably clear; one example is to be found in a sermon which he preached at Camden Chapel in 1834. After referring to the "violent attacks from the monstrous

coalition of Dissenters, Socinians and Infidels," by which the Established Church was being threatened, he goes on to estimate the power of their attack and to affirm his stand: "It is not impossible, though we are far enough from any fears, that the Established Church may give way before the assault; but there are cases in which it is better to belong to the conquered than to the conquering. We will not judge goodness, by the success of an enterprise; and when Satan and infidelity are openly allied, I would rather be trampled on than upheld by the combination."[1] In a similar vein his views are expressed in the editor's preface to William Sherlock's A Practical Discourse on Religious Assemblies, when he writes, "The Church, rudely assailed, threatened with the loss of patronage of the State, has need to examine and assert her apostolic character. She is not one among sects and demoninations: and it behooves her, though with as much of tenderness as of firmness, to maintain and manifest the authority derived to her from her Head--an authority which no human legislature could give, neither can any human legislature destroy; and which renders it a sin to separate from her communion, so long as it cannot be proved a sin to remain in it."[2] When pointing out the error in schism, Melvill is careful not to

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1 Melvill, Miscellaneous Sermons, Vol. III, p. 264.

2 p. XI

disparage dissenting ministers' piety, devotion, knowledge of the Bible or preaching of the Gospel. On these, he casts no shadow of contempt; but he did say, "In a day when men think no authority necessary, provided they have a little turn for public speaking, and can persuade themselves of an inward illumination, set up as preachers and then call themselves ambassadors--this point, we say, of the apostolical succession of the ministry of our Church if one of the weightiest that can be agitated in a Christian community."[1]

As to the administration of the sacraments, Melvill felt that unless served by one who had been ordained by a bishop "whose appointment of God" was "conveyed through the primitive and unadulterated channels. . ."[2] they lacked the necessary authority. Melvill made the Anglican claim to Apostolic Succession the cornerstone of his teaching on the nature of the Church.

Melvill abhorred schism and counted it a sin. Strangely enough his abhorrence of disunity did not produce equal zeal for the promotion of unity in the ecumenic sense. His approach was that of defending the Anglican Church against the growing threat of liberalism, on the grounds that she was the truly reformed, catholic, apostolic Church.

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1 Melvill, Miscellaneous Sermons, Vol. III, p. 265.

2 Melvill, Angels Rejoicing in the Gospel: a sermon preached January 26, 1840 in the Church of St. John the Evangelist, Brighton, p. 26.

Though indispensable for a right understanding of her nature, the apostolic character of the Church did not insure permanence of her ministry in any nation which neglected to receive and promote its blessings. In a sermon on the theme that neglect of the Gospel is followed by its removal, he said: "There are indeed clear and encouraging promises in Scripture, sufficient to assure us that neither outward opposition, nor inward corruption, shall prevail to the extinction of Christ's Church upon earth. But these promises refer generally to the Church, and not to this or that of its sections. They give no ground for expecting that the Church, for example, of England, or the Church of Rome, will never cease to be a church--on the contrary, their tenor is quite compatible with the supposition that England or Rome may so pervert or abuse the Gospel, as to provoke God to with draw it, and give it to lands now overrun with heathenism. There may be, and there are, promises that there shall be always a candle in the world; but the candlestick is a movable thing, and may be placed successively in different districts of the earth."[1] By way of historical evidence, he asks what has been the fate of the once strong churches of Corinth, Colossae, Thessalonica, and of the seven churches of Asia? "Alas, the candlestick has been moved. . .proving that the blessings of Christianity are deposited with a nation to be

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[1] Melvill, University Sermons, 1836, p. 76.

valued and improved; but to despise and misuse them is to provoke their withdrawal."[1]

Melvill refutes what is still a popular misconception on the nature of the Church: that it is a corporation made up of the clergy alone. To speak of a man as designed for the Church when he is preparing for the clerical profession, and to think of him as entering the Church when he takes Holy Orders, is more than a mere verbal inaccuracy; for when it is forgotten that the Church is composed equally of the laity, duties will be either casually dismissed or entirely forgotten, with the result that, says Melvill, "We shall hear of laymen coming forward in support of the church, just as though they were generous and chivalrous defenders of a cause which had no claim on their succour, in place of being bound by their position, and their own vows, to uphold that of which they are sworn members."[2]

Melvill also laid great stress upon the priesthood of all believers and in so doing insisted that membership in the Church is no less real for the layman, who had been invested with a priestly office at his baptism, than it is for the ordained priest. "It is true," he adds,"that the minister receives a twofold ordination, baptism, and the laying on of hands; and that from the latter he receives

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1 Ibid., pp. 77-78.

2 Melvill, Miscellaneous Sermons, Vol. I, p. 289.

authority to perform special duties; yet he pleads that "It did not, it could not, engraft me more thoroughly into the Church, nor give me stronger fellowship than I already possessed by virtue of my baptism. . .I am indeed a minister of the Church, but not on that account any more a member of the Church than any of these among whom I officiate."[1]

Turning to Melvill's thought on the mission of the Church, we find that basic and predominant though the idea of individualism was in his preaching, he saw also that the Christian experience was incomplete in solitude. To provide an opportunity of fellowship for the faithful, and to reach out to those untouched by Christ's religion were functions of the Church. On the mission of the Church, he preached a doctrine that might mark him narrow, intolerant, and bigoted in that he arrogated responsibility for promoting the Gospel to the Established Church in any area of the world claiming allegiance to the Crown. The mere fact that he was a strong supporter of the Society for the Propagation of the Gospel and a member of its Foreign Translation Committee, whose programme was confined to the colonies, is in itself an indication that a strong nationalism coloured his thought on who should receive preferential benefits of the ministry of Christ. In his thought on the mission of

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[1] Ibid.

the Church, Melvill shows a leaning toward the High Church Party whereas in other respects we have seen he was thoroughly Evangelical. But his position defies labelling; in fact, we find him called High Churchman, Low Churchman, and Evangelical.

At home and abroad we find him supporting the banner for the Established Church; he considered that the national mission of the Church was to provide buildings for worship. Between 1760 and 1820 there were not six new churches erected in metropolitan London;[1] if by some miracle, Britons had all chosen to attend church on the same Sunday, not one in ten could have found a seat. But many were even more irritated by the note of exclusiveness that went with the system of paying for pews which prevailed in the majority of churches, including Melvill's first church in Camberwell. This practice alienated many who felt it to be another indication that the Church catered to the privileged with little concern for the poor. The lethargy on the part of the Established Church in providing adequate accommodation for her people was partly due to lack of vision and initiative but also to the French Revolution which diverted resources that might have been used in building new churches. Melvill felt that the Church's failure to expand had not only left thousands in utter ignorance; "but thousands have been driven

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[1] C. Knight, History of London, Vol. V, P. 202.

to the conventicle, who would never have been guilty of schism, had the church extended to them the benefits of her ministry."[1] So serious was the lack of accommodation, said Melvill, "The want of church room has made thousands of dissenters where objection to the church service has made one."[2] Incongruous as it may appear for a man of Melvill's stature as an evangelist to make dissent a motive for action, his zealous churchmanship is seen in such an appeal as this: "As an established church, she falls below her office so long as there are any in the land for whom she does not provide public means of Grace. She may not be able, through any purity, faithfulness, or zeal, to prevent Dissent altogether: but she is bound to cut off from the Dissent all excuse, to offer to every man a share in her services, so that none shall be able to withdraw from her communion on the plea that they could not find a place within her walls."[3]

Such statements as these lifted out of their context suggest that Melvill's thought on the mission of the Church was unduly biased by his love for belief in the established form of religion. But this would be a caricature; for his thought was too saturated in Scripture to allow the mission

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1 Melvill, Angels Rejoicing in the Gospel, p. 26.

2 Ibid.

3 Melvill, University Sermons, 1839, p. 126.

of the Church to be circumscribed by strict denominational limits. After the discontent subsided which threatened disestablishment of the Church, we find no references in his sermons to the brand of churchmanship we have thus far empnasized. We doubt whether his basic convictions on the nature and mission of the true Church were at all modified; only under the stress of attack did he feel constrained to push so hard for the cause of establishment.

If Melvill considered the provision of leadership and adequate accommodation for worship as the primary mission of the Church, her responsibility for the education of the young followed as a condition of any expansion of her ministry. After 1833, there followed a turbulent decade in the field of education where the actions of the state mirrored the reactions of the people against the Church of England as the educator of their children. The wave of discontent began in 1825 when Brougham's movement for "Useful Knowledge" ushered in a new era and provided an opening for attack on the educational monopoly of the Church.[1] Religious instruction was not only considered useless by the secularist; but the imposition of Anglican religion was considered unfair by the Independents. The Established Church, thus opposed by both secular and ecclesiastical forces, was in a dangerous position. Melvill welcomed

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[1] Cornish, op. cit., Part I, p. 197.

the unrest which demanded wider and better education; in 1838 he said, "Are we (clergy) advocating the withholding of knowledge from the people? God forbid! I glory in the diffusion of information. I glory, that, so far as the manifestation of intellect is concerned, the lower classes are treading on the heels of the higher, so that the mechanic of the present day is almost the philosopher of the past."[1] But he goes on to stress that the mere diffusion of "useful knowledge" is not enough ; for, "If you impart other kinds of knowledge without imparting also Christian, if you make men wise for this life and leave them fools for the next, you are only communicating power, without communicating also the disposition to the right use of it; you are elevating thousands, without giving what alone can prevent their being giddy by the height. . .in short, to sum up in a sentence the nature and consequences of National Education, of which Christianity is not the basis and substance, we may say that it could be the offspring of nothing but infidelity, and the parent of nothing but anarchy."[2] To those who advocated religion being taugnt in the schools but on an unsectarian basis regulated by a Board of Commissioners, Melvill voiced this warning: "Let the poor man know that a fouler enemy never entered his village,

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1 Melvill, Religious Education: a sermon preached on behalf of the National Society, p. 32.

2 Ibid., pp. 31-32.

nor crossed his threshold than he, whatever his mental endowments, whatever his political eminence, who would withdraw his boys and girls from schools where Christianity is the prime thing taught; and draft them into institutions where the religion of Jesus must be stripped of all peculiarities, and where, therefore, even the morality that is inculcated must be morality based on insufficient foundation. Alas, for our villagers, when they learn Christianity from scriptural extracts, carefully concocted by Protestant, Papal, Socinian and schismatical Commissioners--each striking out what might be a reproach to himself--and when they learn morals without motives; and motives comparatively they cannot have, since they must know nothing--for this would never go down with the variegated board--of Christ's dying as a sacrifice, or of the everlasting punishment for sin."[1]

Melvill's position was that of opposing any change which threatened to remove the responsibility for education from the hands of the parochial clergy. He based his arguments not on any pride in past accomplishments of the Church in the field of education, for he admits that their efforts have been to "drill the Bible into the head. . . with little systematic endeavour to gain a lodgement for it in the heart," but rather on the radical conviction that sheer ignorance is preferable to an education which

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[1] Ibid., p. 33.

leaves the child to make a theology for himself, or gives him a watered down theology acceptable to all factions of the "hundred-headed schism". "I prefer," he said, "the untutored savage to the well informed infidel; he is not half as dangerous, and he is twice as noble."[1]

In short, he considered that the mission of the Church in the field of education, was to oppose secularization, and to avoid what was pernicious by providing what was wholesome.

From what has been said of Melvill's thought on the nature and mission of the Church, it is evident that he considered both to be intimately and necessarily connected with the State. There is no need to develop further his application of the principle of establishment as it relates to the home and foreign missions of the Church, except to say that he felt that all peoples of the Commonwealth were entitled to the ministry of the Word, and to the sacraments and Christian education dispensed by the Church organically related to the civil administration under which all British subjects lived. Our purpose must now be to discover how he justified the principle of establishment.

He refutes on two grounds, the argument that a union

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[1] Ibid., p. 5.

between Church and State which constitutes an establishment is unhallowed and injurious; the first is based on biblical history and the second on political philosophy. While granting that the Jewish government was unique theocracy, he asks, "Who can think that God would interweave into His theocracy what in its own nature is unlawful?"[1] More cogent is the argument that civil rulers are to a nation exactly what parents are to a family. "When, therefore, I can believe it unlawful for a parent to provide religious instruction for his children, I will also believe it unlawful for a king to provide religious instruction for his subjects. So long as I must think that parents would be fearfully sinful, who should leave their families to pick up religion where they could, I shall also think that rulers would fearfully neglect the chief of their duties, who should leave a population to chance for their theology--to total ignorance or the random preaching of itinerant missionaries."[2]

In developing the later argument, he affirms the law that in spiritual things the supply must precede the demand. "There is no need that the legislature, for example, should send a baker to country villages; they have an appetite for bread, and will provide themselves

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[1] Melvill, Miscellaneous Sermons, Vol. III, p. 265.

[2] Ibid., pp. 265-266.

with the corn and the oven; but there is need that the legislature should send a preacher to these villagers; they have no appetite for religion, and will never provide themselves with Bibles or instructors."[1]

There is to be seen in Melvill's reasoning a dour reluctance to place much trust in disestablished missionary zeal. He felt that it would be a hazardous move to sever from the State a working system for the propagation of the Gospel. Moreover, Melvill is bold to affirm that the loss of patronage and of the advantages of extablishment are only indirectly the real issues involved. His fear was not for the Church's survival and continuing service to the nation; for he said, "Make Episcopalians from this moment a sect, and we are bold to believe that such sect would still be, what an Establishment is, the rallying point of sound theology, the focus of pure Christianity,"[2] His fear was for a State which should be foolish enough to separate itself from the Church. For he believed that the Church had in her nature the strength which would enable her to live by herself; but "the State, by disconnecting itself from true religion, would have written 'Apostate' on its forehead; and in ridding itself of what some dare to call an

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1 Ibid., p. 266.

2 Melvill, Angels Rejoicing in the Gospel, p. 27.

incubus, would have thrown overboard the ballast, which, inasmuch as it is national recognition of subjection to Christ, has saved the kingdom in many fierce hurricanes of political convulsion."[1]

Melvill was certain that God had anointed princes, and given the sceptre to popentates for more important purposes than merely maintaining public order, fostering commerce, and defending the rights of property. These, he insists, are a part of their responsibility, but only a small part of their office. "A king is the vice-regent of Deity, and Deity from His very nature must legislate for eternity."

Melvill's views on the relationship between Church and State reflect his thought at the time when liberalism with its attractive catch-words of equality, purity, simplicity; with its cries of 'remove the abuses' and 'down with beholden respect for either Caesar of God', was threatening traditional civil and ecclesiastical statutes. Such agitation for reform was most evident before 1840 and it is in his sermons preached at Camden Chapel that Melvill's churchmanship, though never prominent to the point of obsession, is at least most definite. In what is published of his subsequent preaching as Golden Lecturer, Canon of St. Paul's and Rector of Barnes, the

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1 Ibid.,

issue of the relation of Church and State, so far as I have been able to discover, is never mentioned.

His silence on the subject after 1840 is hard to explain; but J.H. Overton gives what may be a clue. "The thunder clouds rolled harmlessly away, which at the period when this history closes(1833) seemed likely to burst, and to sweep away the most venerable part of the British Constitution."[1] We can perhaps assume that while the Establishment was under fire and her relationship endangered, he was compelled to affirm his views boldly; but that as the threats subsided, he felt it needed no mention. In his earlier sermons there is to be seen the tendency to relate Christianity to "true churchmanship" but in his later preaching churchmanship is neglected and he concentrates on the making of a "true Christian."

Section VII

Sacraments

A peculiarly candid observer in 1841 made this pungent reflection: "Our impression is that he (the devil) has been more than usually active in his work, among the members of our Church in the present day; and that his grand effort has been to raise the cloud of fictions, theories, and hypotheses, by the shadow and darkness of

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1 The English Church in the 19th Century, p. 312.

which the great realities upon which man's salvation depends, might be wholly or almost wholly, excluded from our view."[1] As we have seen, his observation was pertinent to the thought of his contemporaries on the Doctrine of the Church, but it is an even more valid estimate of the period when considered in the light of the controversy which raged over the sacraments.

Before expounding Melvill's thought on the sacraments, it is worth mentioning here a characteristic of his approach to issues that were being clouded by controversy. We see in his stand on any disputed issue, sober caution, due not to fear of consequences, but rather to fear that the truth may be obscured. This is to be observed in his thought on the Bible, whose authority was "threatened" by the Deist; on the Established Church, whoseposition was threatened by dissent; and again in his thought on the sacraments, whose signigicance was being threatened on the one hand by sacerdotalism and on the other by subjectivism. The point to be recognized is that on no essential issue is he indefinite, but his treatment is such that he avoids obscuring the truth involved. Speaking on the sacraments in general, he says, "Know ye, therefore--ye who, in days such as these, are bold enough to ascribe their true worth to sacraments--to baptism its regenerative virtue, to the Lord's Supper

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[1] The Churchman's Monthly Review, April 1841, p. 178.

its invigorating influence,--know ye that there is danger on your side of the argument as well as on the other. It is sad to degrade sacraments into mere symbols or signs; but it is sad also to substitute the use of sacraments for those processes of inquiry and self-examination and personal subjugation, with which a Christian should be constantly busied. It is sad to speak, as men do speak, of the doctrines of the Church, branding as papistical whatever is not latitudinarian, and pleading their own private judgment as superior authority to the registered decisions of the wise and good from the apostles' days downwards; but it is sad also to rest in externals, to suppose that ordinances can do for us what can only be done by God's blessing upon labour and selfdenial and incessant struggle with evil."[1] Such a statement indicates what we intend to illustrate in more detail. On the Doctrine of the Sacraments, Melvill fought on two fronts; against an excessive subjectivism on the one hand, which tended to belittle the corporate, the institutional, the objective; and against an excessive objectivism on the other hand, which underestimated the personal, individual, intimate elements which are necessary in true religion.

We shall first consider baptism. His main points are clear: it is the instrument of regeneration; the baptized person is made in this sacrament "a member of Christ,

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[1] Melvill, Miscellaneous Sermons, Vol. II, p. 8851

a child of God, and an inheritor of the kingdom of heaven." That this is not merely his position, but that these are "the words of the catechism put by the Church into every baptized child's mouth; alas! when people grow up, they seem to think it incumbent on them to deny, or at least to forget, what was taught them in their infancy!"[1] But for practical purposes, Melvill believed that by virtue of his baptism there is introduced into the person a principle of good, but that the principle of evil is not cast out, with the result that though baptism is a once and for all act of regeneration, there must follow education by which the good principle may be developed and strengthened and the evil principle kept under and subdued.[2] Melvill admits the great mystery of the Sacrament but attributes to it no efficacious magic. The baptized person may wander, rebel, and forfeit his inheritance but he can do nothing that will invalidate his sonship.

What has been said thus far is true of any baptism, infant or adult. When we turn to the baptism of infants, the ambiguity in the New Testament statements on the Sacrament is brought into sharp focus. Melvill's thought may be considered tempered orthodoxy. Preaching on the text, "Suffer the little children to come unto Me, and forbid

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1 Ibid.

2 Ibid., Vol. III, p. 94.

years earlier under the stress of threatened disestablishment, we find his appeal is more blunt and dogmatic: "Hither, will infants be brought, that they may be regenerated in the waters of baptism: Christian parents know that the law of the land may be satisfied if they insert in an office-book the birthday and name of the child, but that the law of Christ is fatally set at naught, unless the priest baptize that child 'in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost'."[1]

He held the orthodox theory of baptismal regeneration: that from the moment the blessing is pronounced in the name of the Trinity, the infant is engrafted into the Church and the process of regeneration is begun. He makes a sharp distinction between the act of regeneration and the fact of conversion. The infant is "born again" when he is baptized and there is no need, he insists, for a second rebirth; when converted, he, like the prodigal son, turns back to the place from which he had vainly strayed. Conversion then, though not necessarily instantaneous, is the condition which must be fulfilled if the grace given in baptism is not to be forfeited. Melvill lands what must have been a telling blow on the attitude of some parents towards their children's finding their way back to God, in these words: "Cold water is often thrown

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[1] Melvill, Angels Rejoicing in the Gospel, p. 27.

on youthful zeal,--for even serious parents can be afraid of their children being too serious, and like piety all the better when it is not too precise--faith with a dash of fashion."[1] Almost in the same breath he puts this challenge to the parents: "Perhaps the indignant exclamation, or at least thought, of many a Christian parent (is): 'Why, it is the subject of my daily prayer, the object of my daily wish, that my children be followers of Christ.' But be not too sure that what you pray for, what you wish for, you also strive for. In this, as in many other things, you may pray without being anxious; you may wish, and be satisfied with wishing. What is the bent of your educational system? Is it an education for time, or an education for eternity? What will the child feel that you most care for?--his interest here, or his interest in the hereafter?--proficiency in Greek, or proficiency in grace?--the power of making his way in the world, or the 'laying hold on the hope set before him in the Gospel?'"[2]

Melvill seems to have interpreted the sacrament of baptism in such a way as to avoid drawing the fire of those Tractarians who held that regeneration is the new birth spoken of in Scripture, and that this is invariably and inevitably conferred by the act of baptism. His emphasis

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[1] Melvill, Miscellaneous Sermons, Vol. III, p. 98.

[2] Ibid., p. 99.

may have provoked a suspicious glance from the Low Churchmen, but no more, for they would probably have agreed that baptism effected membership in the Church and with this status there followed new duties, responsibilities, and privileges. We suspect too that the Evangelicals would gladly have embraced his thought and would have regarded him as one of their own; for though he boldly pointed out to them the mistake of inviting to become children of God, men who are already his children by virtue of their baptism; the majority would have been satisfied by the stress he laid on the necessity of conversion based upon an awareness of sin and a longing for forgiveness from Him whose atonement made forgiveness possible.

We now turn to the Eucharist. Melvill regarded the Lord's Supper as the instrument for maintaining a man in that state of salvation into which he has been admitted by baptism. The Sacrament is an instituted channel for communicating to those made sons in baptism, grace to "walk worthy of their vocation;" while always stressing the sustaining power of the Sacrament, he pointed out the dangers that arise from such a conviction: (1) false dependence on the outward means, which are valuable only in so far as they bring Christ into the soul and make the recipient more heavenly-minded, [1] (2) the false belief

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[1] Ibid., Vol. II, p. 882.

that the elements are the substance of His flesh and blood, but bread and wine are indeed more than mere signs or emblems.[1] (3) It is wrong to consider the sacrament as nothing more than a solemn commemoration, calculated to nourish holy thoughts and pious dispositions.[2] The warnings give a hint of Melvill's position; but as we turn to the more positive aspects of his teaching on the sacrament, we find his thoughts lucid and practical.

First, if the elements themselves are more than signs or emblems, what are they? Through the act of consecration they become "in some most efficient, though spiritual sense, the body and blood of the Saviour."[3] Though violently opposing the doctrine of transubstantiation, Melvill takes the paradoxical stand of being, in a sense, within a hair's breadth of that doctrine and yet miles away from it; for when the catechism speaks of the body and blood as actually "taken by the faithful", though to the eye of

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1 The following paragraph found in his sermon, "Protestantism and Popery," serves to expand this idea: "Against this doctrine of Transubstantiation we protest, not only because there is a contradiction to our senses, for taste and touch and sight assure us that the consecrated bread is still bread, and the consecrated wine is still wine, but because it overthrows the truth of Christ's humanity: it makes His Body infinite and omnipresent; it makes that Body to be upon earth when the Scripture declares it to be in Heaven; and if it thus interferes with the fact of Christ's humanity, affecting vitally the truth of His being a man like ourselves, how can we admit it without destroying the Gospel?" Sermons, (New Edition) 1872, Vol.II, p. 95.

2 Melvill, University Sermons, 1839, p. 116.

3 Ibid., p. 115.

sense they take only the bread and wine, Melvill considered the Church to be "intimating a mysterious, but yet an actual and very close connection between the visible signs and the invisible blessing."[1]

Second, his stress on the importance of receiving aright the sacrament. Here we sense that Melvill's Christian sensitivity must have been rubbed raw by the apparent superficiality of some who approached the holy table; how else can we interpret such an expression as this: "I cannot conclude, that because there may sit around me diligent listeners--listeners, who, Sabbath after Sabbath flock up to God's house as though they rejoiced in the return of the solemn weekly gathering, they must be 'receiving with meekness the engrafted word, which is able to save the soul.' Neither, when the assembly is vastly reduced, and there are none in God's house but those who desire to kneel round the altar, and to 'shew forth the Lord's death till He come,' can I feel an assurance, however I may hope, that everyone who approaches to eat the consecrated bread, and drink the consecrated wine, loves Jesus Christ in sincerity, and is stricken at heart at seeing Him thus 'evidently set forth crucified amongst us.' In the judgment of charity, I am bound to regard all as true believers who are regular in attendance on the ordinances of the Church. . . but, in

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[1] Ibid., p. 116.

bottle will rend the bottle and make it more incapable than ever of retaining Divine things."[1] Right reception of the sacrament requires sober preparation. A man must search his heart for evidence that his religion is below the surface. Melvill calls for preparation which tests motives. "You must search for certainty. . that it is heart work with you; that you are seeking and striving after inward purity, sin being hated for itself, and not only for its consequences,--holiness desired as the very element of the soul, and not only as a condition of salvation."[2] Without the due preparation of scrutinizing motives, the participants in the sacrament of the Lord's Supper, though they derive pleasure and a certain satisfaction from the ministry of the elements may as "diligent hearers and constant communicants", when called to stand before the great white throne, say, "We have eaten and drunk in Thy presence, and Thou hast taught in our streets"; but on the authority of the Judge himself, they may be rejected as "workers of iniquity" because their approach to the table was with a "heart uncircumcised." They will be among the multitude who went a long way towards heaven and then stopped short. "What," says Melvill, "shall torment a man in hell, like the consciousness that he had been almost in heaven. . .(because) almost believers upon earth, they are almost guests at the

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[1] Melvill's Sermons: Latter Years, Vol. I, pp. 152-153.

[2] Melvill, Miscellaneous Sermons, Vol. II, p. 880.

marriage-supper above!"[1]

Section VIII

Worship

Theology is defined as the "science which treats of God, and of man's duty to Him."[2] Simple though that definition is, it points to the truth that a study of theological thought is incomplete unless due emphasis is laid upon man's duties to God. Worship is one of these duties; so we conclude this chapter on Melvill's theological thought by referring to his ideas on the form of worship and aids to worship.

The nineteenth century witnessed radical alteration in the form of worship: symbolism was sacrificed to simplicity; where once the worshipper's gaze centred upon the altar and the cross, new churches were built in which the preacher perched in his pulpit against the "wonderful" background of golden organ pipes, became the new centre of worship. The traditional Liturgy was often mutilated on the grounds of doctrine or curtailed on the pretext of the exigency of time. On these matters of form, Melvill believed that "rites and ceremonies, so long as they are not against Scripture, must be regarded as indifferent things, neither good in themselves or bad; and if they are indifferent, they may be

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[1] Ibid., pp. 901-902.

[2] Chamber's Twentieth Century Dictionary.

omitted, or introduced, or changed, without at all affecting the act of divine worship, and merely in conformity, according to diversity of circumstances, with the rule of the Apostle, 'Let all things be done decently and in order.'"[1] He finds authority for this view in the attitude of Jesus in His celebration of the Passover. At the first Passover in Egypt, the strict injunction had been to eat "with their loins girded, their shoes on their feet, their staves in their hands, and in haste." Over the years the service was altered that it might answer better to their altered circumstances; they ate reclining on couches, they added the drinking of wine, and included in the service the singing of psalms; for none of these modifications or innovations could they plead divine institution. Melvill pointed out that, had Jesus been a leader disposed to make "ceremonies the occasion of schism, He might have armed Himself with very specious objections, and have urged that there were conscientous grounds for separating from the communion of the national Church."[2] We conclude that Melvill was no pleader for static, stale forms of worship starved of meaning. He took his stand not in opposition to change, but on the issue of who has the authority to institute such change. Here we see Melvill unequivocally a Churchman. He said: "The Church having appointed what

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[1] Melvill, Sermons on the Less Prominent Facts, Vol. I, p. 95.

[2] Ibid., p. 94.

she judges most for the general good, individuals have no right to separate and oppose, because they do not find the appointment precisely congenial with their feelings of circumstances."[1]

In his sermons we find occasional references to principles underlying the form of worship, but we would wish for more evidence that would shed light on his practice. Many of his sermons open with a reference to the Lesson prescribed by the Church for the particular Sunday in the ecclesiastical year. Such reference is never merely perfunctory, but the sermon always develops the theme which the Lesson suggests. In this connection he remarked: "The Church in her wisdom has appropriated certain days to the special consideration of certain doctrines, not fearing that the people might be wearied by repetition, but rather computing that they would be advantaged."[2] Commenting on the sacraments, Melvill said, "We may yet hope for a time. . . when fear of detaining a congregation a little longer than ordinary shall not drive the sacred rite of Baptism into corners and by-hours; and when Sunday service at least, shall never be thought complete without the celebration of the Eucharist."[3]

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[1] Ibid., p. 98.

[2] Melvill, Miscellaneous Sermons, Vol. II, p. 803.

[3] W. Sherlock, op. cit., p XVI.

contrive to convert this joyous spiritual exercise into a positive infliction;"[1] and Melvill realized that singing, like music in general, had been given up by the Church to the world with the result that "for the most part our psalmody is discreditable to our congregations; it is either given over to a few hired singers, as though we were to praise God by deputy; or is left with the children of the National schools, as though, in growing older, we had less cause for thankfulness."[2]

Today, Melvill's views on the part music should play in worship would hardly draw passing notice, but in his day some churches rather than cope with what has been jocularly labelled the "war department" of the Church gave up completely the ministry of music. He was careful to avoid mistaking emotion for religion, but affirmed that "we creatures are so constituted as to be acted on through our senses and feelings; and whilst emotion is not religion, it will often be a great step towards it."[3] Here again for lack of records our research must stop short of discovering how effective music was used as an aid to worship in Melvill's churches.

The other essential aid to worship is prayer. Here man sends forth the ships of his need with the hope of their

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1 April, 1827, Art. X, "Ecclesiastical Discipline."

2 Melvill, Sermons on Less Prominent Facts, Vol. I, p. 106.

3 Ibid., p. 109.

returning laden with strength from God. Melvill insists that a sense of need, coupled with the conviction that only God can supply that need, will provoke real prayer. "Be not content," he implored his congregation,"till you have--what as fallen and ruined creatures in a state of peril you ought to have--an abiding sense of abiding want; so that at no moment are you at a loss what to ask for, and none at a loss whom to ask it from. Till you have this--this which will lead you to pray in the crowd as well as in solitude--this which will keep the heart ever sitting at God's gate, the spirit ever bent on intercourse with heaven--your religion is at best that of the hypocrite or the formalist."[1]

Melvill's advice to those still on the lower levels of prayer, is when kneeling down for prayer, to pray that there you may be helped to pray. In other words, "If the spirit dictated the sentences in Scripture as to our need of His assistance in order to pray, and if it be this Spirit, which in any case urges a man to prayer, then evidently he who, when he kneels down to pray, prays that he <u>may</u> pray, is praying <u>by</u> the Spirit, whilst praying <u>for</u> the Spirit."[2] What are we to conclude when our prayers become stagnant? Melvill suggests the following: "Probably you left off

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[1] Melvill, Golden Lectures, 1850, No. 1622, p. 28.

[2] <u>Ibid</u>., p. 31.

praying because you were not willing to leave off sinning. Habitual prayer and habitual sin cannot exist long together. Sin will make you uneasy in prayer, or prayer will make you uneasy in sin. It was a good saying of some of the old divines--'Praying will make a man leave off sinning, or sinning will make a man leave off praying.'"[1]

From these reflections on prayer in general, it is evident that he was not a man whose prayers were of the parrot variety. In fact he questions "whether the more formal prayers of those whose religion is but a name, should be called prayers at all; for unless the heart goes along with tne lip, there is undoubtedly nothing of acceptable petition."[2]

J. H. Overton after remarking on the lazy habits of many worshippers, records the ingenious solution of one divine who was provoked by the stubborn refusal of some to stand during the singing of praise. "After speaking of the irreverent posture of sitting down, he added, 'For the aged, the diseased, and the infirm, in retaining their seats every apology is offered;' and at the next psalm all who did not desire to be classified under any of those categories stood up."[3] We find a striking parallel in one of Melvill's sermons which must have proved equally

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1 Ibid., p. 30.

2 Ibid., p. 26.

3 Op. cit., p. 132.

effective. "Put in the pew of really devout persons one of your careless and indolent loungers, who sit while others kneel, and stare while others pray, and the devotion of the rest will be sadly impaired; they will be almost sure to feel the chilling influence, and be less ardent in worship than when not in contact with this moral icicle."[1]

Melvill's thought on prayer as an aid to worship illustrated, above all, the depth of his own devotional life as well as his resolute conviction that true religion demands a "ceaseless flying unto God" in prayer. Melvill's definition of prayer provides a fitting conclusion to this chapter on his theology, for it embraces the nature of the God whom he worshipped and the response which He requires from those whom He loves. "Volumes have been written on it; but the best and truest description is founded on the doctrine of the Trinity. I should call a prayer a longing desire excited by the third person, cleansed and presented by the second, and smiled on by the first."[2]

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1 Melvill, University Sermons, 1839, p. 121.

2 Melvill, Miscellaneous Sermons, Vol. I, p. 192.

CHAPTER IV

Melvill's Homiletical Method

When Dale Carnegie discovered that worry was one of the major problems of adults, he decided to write a book about it. His first step was to visit New York's great Public Library. To his horror he found 189 books listed under WORMS, and only 22 under WORRY. The person who attempts a study of homiletical method experiences somewhat the same "horror" as Carnegie. He discovers that, but for a few notable exceptions, the truly great preadhers were apparently too busy preaching to point out underlying principles which make preaching an art and not an accident. Perhaps there is an even more fundamental reason why few books have been written which directly approach the problem of homiletics as a science: the very nature of the subject excludes hard and fast rules. Preaching may be called the proclamation of Truth through a chosen personality; now we can to some degree systematize Truth, and call the result dogmatics, because Divine Truth, although it is never static, is eternal; we cannot, however dogmatize on homiletical method in the same way, because in the wisdom of God, Truth is mediated through personality; and personality is distinguished by variety rather than conformity. We say this by way of introduction to a study of Melvill's homiletical method, for in probing for principles

in his preaching, we soon discover that in the personality with which we are working, he has traits uniquely his own, emulation of which could only result in homiletical suicide; yet his preaching illustrates certain principles which, even if they cannot be followed today, can be admired and grasped as clues to understanding his effectiveness as a preacher. Our primary purpose in this chapter will be to demonstrate how Melvill proclaimed the Truth.

Section I

The Man Himself

His photograph show that Melvill's appearance was not striking. His small face, high forehead, and abundant crop of hair gave him somewhat of a boyish look. James Grant observed that "His eyes are less than average size, and are of a light blue. . .His complexion is of a darkish hue, and would at times lead to the conclusion that the discharge of his ministerial duties, or some other cause, had to some extent effected his health."[1] At the time of Melvill's death, The Times reported that "In his early years he had a melodious voice and a somewhat handsome person and figure, both of which were decided helps to him as a pulpit orator; but unlike most popular preachers, he was never deficient in sound and sensible matter."[2] Phillips Brooks, after

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1 J. Grant, The Metropolitan Pulpit, Vol. II, p. 20.

2 February 10, 1871.

hearing him preach at St. Pauls in 1865, commented, "He is an old, white-haired man with a noble figure and earnest, kindly face."[1] Another impression one receives from his photographs is that age little altered his face or figure. His dark bushy hair grayed and whitened, his eyes wore a more tired look; but no one who had known Melvill in his thirties could have failed to recognise him in his sixties.

It is a strange fact that so little should have been recorded about the life of a man whose every word spoken from the pulpit seems to have been eagerly awaited and immediately put into print.[2] About those qualities of character which would aid in completing the picture of Melvill as a man, our research has gleaned a few unsatisfying grains of fact and a handful of chaff. One inquiry made by the trustees of Camden Chapel on Melvill's qualifications requested the opinion of the Rev. M. Pritchett of Charter House on his ability to "meet the large demand made upon a man's brain as well as heart by three sermons weekly." To which Pritchett laconically replied: "I think highly both of his brains and his heart. I am not a craniologist, but I think he is a very clever and good man. . He is ready of speech when called to exertion, but not

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1 A.V.G.Allen, Life and Letters of Phillips Brooks, Vol. I, p. 559.

2 In the advertisement of the 1839 edition of University Sermons, Melvill complained of the liberties taken by a periodical called The Pulpit and wrote: "The author is far from sorry that others should have the opportunity of knowing how greatly, as well as continually, he is injured by a publication which scarcely leaves him any property in the produce of his own thought and toil.

talkative."[1]

For some reason, the wishes of the Trustees for three sermons weekly from Melvill were never satisfied. For a time he preached both a morning and evening sermon; later he gave up the morning service to his assistant and was usually to be found in his pulpit only on Sunday evening. Crowds invariably packed the church for these evening services. As a young man E.P. Hood was a member of Melvill's congregation and has made this reflection: "Often, very often, have we seen him, during the reading of the prayers on the Sabbath evening, open his pew door and beckon in some poor old man or woman standing in the crowded aisles. On such occasions, he always shared his prayer-book with the humble worshipper.. Little traits of character like these open up to us the whole manhood, especially when we see them to be the result of unaffected and spontaneous kindness."[2] An incident told by George Banbury, one of the students at Haileybury, furnishes another insight into Melvill's character. "One morning just at the end of my fourth term, I was sent for by the Principal, but was quite unable to conjecture the cause of the summons. I found Mr. Melvill in full canonicals, and he at once opened the case by saying: 'Mr. Banbury, I hear that you found fault with my sermon last Sunday. There is the

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[1] Camden Parish Magazine, Vol. I, No. XVII, p. 123.

[2] E.P. Hood, The Lamps of the Temple, p. 236.

sermon, which I shall now proceed to read to you, and I shall be happy to answer any criticisms you may pass thereon.' The idea of a mild youth being placed in this position by one of the brightest intellects, and one of the most brilliant preachers in England, struck me as so absurd, that for a moment or two I could not imagine what he meant. It suddenly occured to me that on the previous day on the cricket field I had said: 'The Principal gave us rather a mild sort of farewell in his sermon, he ought to have wished us goodbye more heartily.' This had been repeated, and most probably exaggerated to him; hence my summons. All was soon explained, and I am afraid that his parting kind remarks, as regards myself, were far more than I deserved."[1]

If Melvill had a sense of humour, little trace of it ever crept into his preaching. In fact he once preached on the text "I said of laughter, It is mad; and of mirth, What doeth it?" (Eccl. 2:2) and emphasized the insanity of merely merry views of life, and the madness and danger of satire; and especially condemned laughing at serious things. On one occasion in the Haileybury College Chapel Melvill proved that he was human enough not always to practice what he preached. The Professor of Political Economy, Rev. Richard Jones was preaching, of whom Sidney

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[1] Memorials of Old Haileybury College, p. 161; hereafter cited as Memorials.

Smith is reported to have said, "He carried a vintage in his countenance and last week's bill of fare on his waistcoat."[1] As a preacher, Jones was more of a clown than a Christian; he had an old file of village sermons which he preached in rotation. One favourite was called the 'cockatrice sermon' on a text from Isaiah 59:5. His appearance itself was cause enough for levity, but when in conclusion he looked up from "his sermon book to give emphasis to his question and said, 'And now, my brethren, let me ask you: Which of you has not hatched a cockatrice's egg?'--with that the house came down and even the Principal was quite unable to look grave."[2]

Melvill was not one to flaunt his piety. A passage in one of his sermons may contain an autobiographical note. "If I wanted tuition from a preacher in prayer, I should not wish it from him while he was preaching, nor even though prayer might be the subject of the sermon. I would go to him in his closet rather than in his pulpit; that, in the more subdued tone of mind, in the calmer, the more chastened and abased sentiments which may be expected in a man prostrate before God, as compared with the same man haranguing his fellow men, I might have better ground of hope for those contrite expressions, those burdened cadences,

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1 History of the County of Hertfordshire, ed. W. Page, p. 98.

2 Memorials, p. 176.

those glowing aspirations, which befit the supplications of one fallen but redeemed."[1]

We suspect that his character was so harmoniously cemented with humility that his radiance often bore even more telling witness for Christ than did his words. An observation he made on personal evangelization is undoubtedly indicative of his own approach; "If it be true, as is asserted by our Lord, that 'out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh,' we may confidently reckon, that where there is genuine piety, it will give tone to the ordinary conversation. Not indeed that the talking of religion is any necessary indication of its reality--there is more ground for suspecting hypocrisy, than for concluding sincerity, where a man seems anxious to abtrude upon others his own spiritual experience."[2] Melvill's sermons give ample proof that he knew the workings of the human heart well enough to avoid using homiletical battering rams in the pulpit, and we suppose that his Christian witness as a man was contagious rather than obnoxious. Though it can be said that he literally lived in order to preach the Gospel, he saw the need of using tact and wisdom as to time, method and place.

"The faith which we profess to believe, we must teach

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[1] Melvill, Sermons on Less Prominent Facts, Vol. I, p. 247.

[2] Melvill, University Sermons, November, 1839.

until we die, and the vigour of our understandings, and the labour of our studies, and the fervency of our prayers, all must be gathered into one general dedication, and given heartily and unreservedly to the mighty work of winning souls to the cross of the Redeemer. And if there be a pause in the arduous career--if there be hesitation, or sluggishness, or undue courtesy, or if the base desire of sordid gain, or the unhallowed lust of reputation, obtrude themselves into the seat of sacred functions, or prostitute the church into a mere arena of proud display, making eternity, and hell, and heaven, a sort of convenient material, which may be beaten into gold, or melted into mitres: why, then, of all men on the face of this earth, there breathes not one who deserves so justly, as the misnamed minister of the Gospel, to become a mark to the living finger of scorn, and to be wept over and bewailed by all that it held excellent in creation."[1] Such were the views Melvill held on the Christian ministry. It was Melvill's resolute conviction that the minister who took advantage of the pulpit to parade his own talents and thus gain credit for himself, or was satisfied to preach a cautious, half-starved theology, would be better off "had he not been born, or that the Church had ministered to him the rites of burial as well as

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[1] Melvill, Miscellaneous Sermons, vol. I, p. 415.

of baptism before she gave up her altars to his scourge."[1]

The minister of the Church who, through "pride, or covetousness, or sensuality receives the scorn of public reprobation," stands before God and men shorn of excuse; for "in the ripeness of manhood, he voluntarily vowed the yet stronger vows of ordination, binding himself with all solemnity, as in the presence of God, to make himself a pattern to Christ's flock."[2] Melvill poured contempt on the minister who either by profession or by practice wantonly abused his high office. But he also recognized that the minister who never experiences the sting of reproach was not preaching from the heart of the Gospel. He knew from experience the difficulty of being an honest Christian preacher: for the facts of Christian doctrine are "strongly offensive to the great body of men; therefore, there is reluctance to bring them forward, and so much readiness to explain them away."[3] As an illustration of this he referred to a series of sermons he had preached on the Second Coming of Christ and said, "The minister's business is to seek earnestly teaching from God, and then utter what he believes to be the truth, without calculating consequences; and one comfort there is to myself, though I speak it as solemnly as if I lay on my death-bed, is that

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1 Ibid., p. 490.

2 Ibid., p. 292.

3 Melvill's Sermons: Latter Years, vol. I, p. 83.

the sermons by which I have gained most reproach have been those to which I have given most prayer."[1]

Hyprocrisy Melvill abhorred above all sins. On this his attack was vehement and telling. We can imagine what his scorn of a hypocritical minister would have been when he blasted forth in these words: "We talk of Christ, and we preach of Christ, and we write of Christ, but do we delight in Christ? We have, many of us, been brought up in Christ--we have been educated in the books of his faith, and in the profession of his religion, and perhaps take it for granted that we are converted because we have always been evangelical. Alas! alas! the religion of numbers of our professors is a sort of heir-loom from their fathers; and knowing the gospel by heart, they are godly by rote, and call themselves pious while they prove themselves parrots."[2]

We conclude that as a man, Melvill would neither have warranted nor wanted a second glance from anyone passed on the street; his character was undistinguished in virtues, but not deficient in quality; and as a man of God, he stood out as a workman who needed not to be ashamed, for he rightly handled with courage the word of Truth.

Section II

The Congregation

Henry Sloane Coffin has pointed out that Phillips

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[1] Melvill, Miscellaneous Sermons, Vol. I, p. 494.

[2] Ibid., p. 74.

Brooks' memorable description of preaching as "truth through personality," omits an indispensable factor--the immediate object.[1] Real preaching is the communication of a message designed, directed and delivered by a man to the particular needs of men. In putting, the golfer uses the same stance, grip, club and type of ball on each green, but the wise golfer studies the roll, the bend of the grass and the "speed of the turf" before he putts. The duffer on the other hand, seldom studies the situation carefully; he repeatedly pokes at the ball and trusts to luck. This illustration is of course imperfect, but certain parallels are obvious. In any sermon, the preacher as a person is a constant, as is his characteristic style, but his speech situation is a variable. In preaching, as in golf, there are duffers who ignore conditions and trust to luck that what they have to say will strike home. Melvill preached to differing congregations and we shall examine his approach in different preaching situations.

First, there was the general congregation made up of people who came to their own church to hear their own preacher. It will be remembered that Melvill ministered to

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1 On page 157 of his book, What to Preach, Dr. Coffin cites this description of preaching which is to be found on page 8 in Phillips Brooks' Lectures on Preaching; but had not Dr. Coffin overlooked a sentence on page 5, he would have read, "Preaching is the communication of truth by man to men"; though as far as he goes, Dr. Coffin's deduction is valid, his comment is hardly fair.

settled congregations only at the beginning of his ministry and near the end;at Camden Chapel from 1829 to 1844 and as rector in the parish of Barnes from 1863 to 1870. We shall consider his preaching to the congregations of Camberwell and Barnes to be of the general type.

Canon Heaviside has written: "As a general preacher I always put Melvill as the first preacher in the Church of England in my time and I have heard but cannot vouch for it that Gladstone has said the same thing."[1] If Gladstone did venture such an estimate we too have failed to find any record; but his biographer, John Morley, writes that "He was immensely struck by Melvill, whom some of us have heard pronounced by the generation before us to be the most puissant of all men in his calling. 'His sentiments,' Mr. Gladstone said, 'are mainly in tone; he deals powerfully with all his subjects; his language is flowing and unbounded; his imagery varied and lofty as are his conceptions; he is not, I think, less remarkable for soundness and healthiness of mind.'"[2]

Melvill was judged to be at his best when preaching in his own pulpit; but study of his sermons preached "at home" reveal little of what might be called intimate bonds which held him close to his own people. This is not to say

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1 Memorials, p. 157.

2 Ibid., p. 100.

that such bonds were absent, but they are not particularly evident. His first anniversary sermon preached at Camberwell is a mild exception. For the evening sermon, the text he chose was St. Paul's cry "Woe unto me if I preach not the Gospel," and he named the sermon "Ministerial Faithfulness", and addressed it to "God's people assembled within these walls."[1] His remarks fell into two divisions: (1) What it is to preach the Gospel and (2) Why woe is unto the minister if he preach not the Gospel. Not until the conclusion did he make any overt reference to the personal nature of the occasion; he had expounded the high motives which the "wrath of God" and the "love of Christ" require of the minister, and added, "Indeed, brethren, I dare not presume to say that these motives have reigned with the predominance they deserve over my public ministrations in this place; but there is no presumption in affirming, that I heartily desire to be completely under their influence; and there is sincerity, in requesting that, as a congregation, you would discharge your duty towards your minister, and PRAY on his behalf, that he may grow more and more single-hearted in the discharge of his pastoral office."[2] What better request could a man make of his congregation? Yet could we not wish for some evidence that he loved them simply because they were

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[1] Melvill, Miscellaneous Sermons, vol. I, p. 415.

[2] Ibid., p. 419.

the sheep of his fold as well as the children of God?

If Melvill ever fell short, it was in this pastoral work for which he asked the congregation to pray. Except in his faithful ministry to the dying, he was no pastor; and this may explain what we feel to be lacking in his preaching to the general congregation. H.H. Farmer's warning may in some measure apply to Melvill. "To succumb to the temptation to rely on your pulpit powers to make up for deficiency on the pastoral side is fatal. In the end it leads to what I can only call 'French-lacquer' preaching. . ."[1] We believe Melvill was thus tempted, but not fatally; in some of his preaching there are daubs of French-lacquer. His love for God shines out; his love for men, though less obvious, is also seen.

Melvill's strength as a preacher to the general congregation lay in the presentation of spiritual truths, not in display of personal affection. He, more than most men, lost himself and his feelings in his message.

G. J. Davies has said, "Melvill had the power of confirming the faith of many disciples, so much trust did they place in his intellectual powers and sincerity."[2] Edwin Paxton Hood's testimony seems to confirm this observation; "In many of our first feeble ascents up the hill

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1 Servant of the Word, p. 94.

2 Successful Preachers, p. 48.

of intellectual difficulty we were indebted to this training hand. Henry Melvill first taught us to sing Excelsior."[1] His preaching to his own congregation attracted many strangers to the church and E.M. Roose said that his congregation was not merely numerous, but was made up of the best educated and most enlightened classes of society. "It is said that no less than forty barristers attend every Sunday to enjoy the intellectual treat which his preaching affords."[2] "That Mr. Melvill's preaching should attract so large an intellectual audience," said James Grant, "far from being a circumstance of surprise, is just what I should have expected; but that he should be, as I know he is, run after and idolized as a minister, by hundreds of the humbler and least intelligent classes of society."[3]

The evidence furnished by the sermons themselves, the testimony of those who heard them, and reports of impartial observers combine to supply the clue to his effectiveness as a preacher to the general congregation. Melvill knew his business; he knew the Gospel of God, and the human heart and how to apply the one to the other. This, we believe, explains the interest of the intellectual, the grateful loyalty of the humble worshipper, and the crowds being eagerly attentive

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1 Op. cit., p. 418.

2 Ecclesiastica, p. 412.

3 Op. cit., p.4.

and moved by his preaching ministry.

The University congregation is the second type which must be considered. Melvill was chosen Select Preacher before the University of Cambridge in 1836, 1837 and 1839. In accepting these invitations, he was called to preach a sermon each Sunday afternoon for a month in Great St. Mary's Church. While in Cambridge for these special sermons, Melvill also preached in the evenings at Great St. Mary's Church and once in St. Michael's. Melvill, himself, published his University sermons. In the preface to the 1836 edition he wrote: "The author begs to state that he prints these sermons in compliance with the wish of many Members of the University. Immediately after their delivery, he received an address from the resident Bachelors and Undergraduates, headed by the most distinguished names, and numerously signed, requesting their publication. The same request was also made from other quarters. Under these circumstances the Author felt that he had nothing to do, but to regret that the Sermons were not more deserving of the interest thus kindly manifested, and to commit them at once to the press."

Melvill's first University sermons were preached in the year Charles Simeon died. Simeon had long been the champion interpreter of a virile, evangelical religion at Cambridge; but in spite of all his efforts, a dry stereo-

typed theology was in favour among the University authorities, and few looked encouragingly upon any efforts to quicken the dry bones into spiritual life. Many tutors and graduates who attended the University services did so to offer their tribute of example or propiety. The old verger at Great St. Mary's used to say; "I've heard every sermon in this Church for the last forty years;" then piously added, "and thank God I'm a Christian still."[1]

Melvill's preaching and the large congregations he attracted were a radical departure from the ordinary. "Heads of houses, far beyond their wont, evince a desire to occupy their cushioned stalls. . . Tutors and graduates. . and undergraduates crowded with an eagerness which, I believe, the University has rarely witnessed since to hear the man of God proclaim from that honoured pulpit the word of life," so said Daniel Moore of Melvill's University preaching. "Yes, brethren," he continued, "I speak that I do know, and testify that I have seen when I tell of strange and consentaneous alacrity with which men of all diversities of thought,--or all religious sentiments or of none,--rushed to hear the announcements of truth, to many of them as strange as they were unwelcome, and which they would hardly have borne with patience from any other lips."[2]

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1 R.M. Finlayson, Life of Canon Fleming, pp. 26-27.

2 D. Moore, The Veil Lifted Up, p. 4.

How can this resurgent interest in Melvill's University preaching be explained? One asset he possessed which weighed heavily on the University man's mind was the fact that Melvill had carried off the University's highest mathematical honours. In 1821 he had been named Second Wrangler, but even more remarkable was his winning the first Smith's prize over the Senior Wrangler. These accomplishments in themsleves were enough to make many sit up and take notice of what he had to say. But even these accomplishments do not provide the whole reason for Melvill's great popularity as a university preacher. We can imagine that he might have drawn attention once; but had he not had something to say, his popularity would have been short lived. He was graced with other commendable advantages for such a type of congregation. As a practical dialectician, a capable biblical scholar, and an eloquent orator he made the religion of Jesus palatable to a generation of students whose taste for evangelical Christianity was more dead than alive.

As we proceed in attempting to discover causes for Melvill's effectiveness in preaching to the University congregation, we must recall that our subject is his homiletical method. Melvill succeeded where other men had failed partly because the respect he had earned as a man of science was enhanced when Cambridge men caught his fire as a man of God.

He was thus able to melt the icy scepticism which choked the channel leading from God to the hearts and minds of thoughtful young men. In every University sermon he preached, Melvill welded on to the shaft of it a hard, sharp point of thrusting relevancy enabling it to penetrate into the depth of conscience where decisions are made. We see two fundamental qualities which accounted for much of the irresistable power that was so evident in his preaching. The first is that "something" so indispensible in preaching yet so difficult to describe. It is that inspired quality which the listeners feel, and in whose absence they fidget. This "something" which we grope for words to express, may have been described by Melvill himself. "I speak," he said, "to you as men... . and I desire to catch some sparks of the spirit which animated St. Paul, and say to you with all earnestness and all the affection which befits an ambassador of God, 'Examine yourselves whether ye be in the faith.'"[1] University men sensed that Melvill had "caught the sparks of the spirit;" he was radiantly earnest; and his outspoken and fearless charges cut to the marrow of a faithless generation.

The second important factor in his method of preaching to University men is his way of expressing Christ's claim on life, on every life. This demanding note is a

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[1] Melvill, Miscellaneous Sermons, vol. I, p. 489.

characteristic of all his preaching and will be further developed in another connection; yet it warrants mention here. I do not mean to suggest that Melvill was continually nagging at people; but he believed that when Christ knocks, He not only wishes to draw attention, but expects an answer. A preacher's handling of this indispensible element in Christ's religion often indicates how much he himself believes that the living God in a personal encounter with living men makes real claims. Melvill warns of the tempation to apply the "balm of the gospel" without first making clear that God also makes certain demands. Melvill saw what is sometimes overlooked--that the demand and the succour are inseparably one; and this emphasis is noticable in his University sermons.

Thus far we have suggested methods we feel were basic in Melvill's approach to the University congregation; now we shall illustrate these with excerpts from his University Sermons. "I am", said Melvill, "through apostasy, a wayward thing, with crippled energies; contracted capacities, and desires engrossed by the perishable. . . I had Heaven before me, and might have entered it through an obedience which could hardly be called a trial; but now, depraved in inclination, and debased in power, to what can I look forward but tribulation and wrath? Oh, this is to remember from whence I I am fallen."[1] Such confession if made by the ordinary

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[1] Melvill, University Sermons, 1836, p. 73.

University preacher, might have been lightly considered either spurious spirituality or what Dr. Gossip calls having a "touch of sour grapes,"[1] but such a statement from Melvill, the Second Wrangler and Smith Prizeman, spoken in honest humility, must have provoked at least an element of wonder in those who knew him to be a man of first-rate intellectual and moral calibre.

The following is an example of Melvill's method of giving eschatological perspective to man's temporal pursuits: "I know of a coming tempest--and would to God that the younger part, more especially, of this audience might be stirred by its approach to repentance and righteousness! I know of a coming tempest, with which the Almighty shall shake terribly the earth; the sea and waves roaring, and the stars falling from the heavens. Then shall there be a thousand shipwrecks, and immensity be strewed with the fragments of a stranded navy. Then shall vessel upon vessel, laden with reason and high intelligence and noble faculty, be drifted to and fro, shattered and dismantled, and be at last thrown on the shore as fuel for the burning. But there are ships which shall not founder in this battle and dissolution of the elements. There are ships which shall be in no peril whilst this, the last hurricane which is to sweep our creation confounds earth and sea and sky; but which--when the fury is overpart, and the light of a

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[1] In Christ's Stead, p. 68.

morning which is to know no night breaks gloriously forth--shall be found upon crystal and tranquil waters, resting beautifully on their shadows. These are those which have been anchored upon Christ."[1]

A less picturesque appeal is found in another University sermon: "Would to God that we might all strive to break away from the seductions and flatteries of earth, and give ourselves in good earnest to seeking happiness in Heaven. And what is it that we ask of men, when we entreat them to escape from the magician, and live for eternity? Is it that they should be less intellectual, less philosophical? On the contrary, religion is the nurse of intellect, and philosophy is most notable when doing homage to Revelation. It is not intellectual to live only for this world, it is not philosophical to remain ignorant of God. Is it that they should surrender their pleasures, and walk a round of unvaried mortification? We ask them to surrender nothing which a rational being can approve, or an immortal vindicate. We leave them every pleasure which can be enjoyed without a blush, and remembered without remorse. We ask only that they would flee those vices whose end is death, cultivate those virtues which are as much the happiness as the ornament of man, and propose to themselves an object commensurate with their capacities. This, let them

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[1] Melvill, University Sermons, 1836, p. 19.

be assured, is practical Christianity--to shun what, even as men, they should avoid, and pursue what, even as men they should desire."[1]

In another sermon after he had expounded the privileges which result from accepting the offers of the Gospel, Melvill remarked; the wonder is that all are not eager to make those privileges their own. "Yet, alas! the ministers of Christ have to exclaim, with the prophet, 'Who hath believed our report?' and with Elihu, 'None saith, Where is God my Maker, who giveth songs in the night?' There may yet be moral insensibility in numbers who hear me. What shall we say to them? They may have youth on their side, and health, and plenty. The sky may be clear and the voice of joy may be heard in their dwelling. But there must come a night, a dreary and oppressive night; for youth must depart, and strength be enfeebled, and sorrow encountered, and the shadows of evening fall upon the path. . .they may have their songs now; but then we shall have only bitter exclamation, 'The harvest is past, the summer is ended, and we are not saved.' We warn you in time. Though the firmament be bright, we show you the cloud, small as a man's hand, already rising from the sea; and we urge you to the breaking loose from habits of sin, and fleeing straightway to the Mediator Christ."[2]

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[1] Melvill, University Sermons, 1837, p. 19.

[2] Ibid., pp. 38-39.

For his last sermon as Select Preacher in Feruary, 1837, he preached on the general resurrection and judgment. It was not so much a message of warning as a sober demonstration of the eschatological truth that the Gospel of God is an offer that cannot be evaded. He closed the series of sermons with these words; "To the large mass of you it is probable that I shall never speak again. But we shall meet, when the sheeted dead are stirring, and the elements are dissolving. And, 'knowing the terror of the Lord, we persuade men.' Would that we could persuade you. Is there no voice from the 'great white throne;' nothing startling in the opened books; no eloquence in the trumpet of the archangel; nothing terrible in the doom, 'depart ye cursed;' nothing beautiful in the words, 'come ye blessed?' I cannot plead with you, if you are insensible to the sublime and thrilling oratory of the Judgment scene. If you can go away, and be as dissipated as ever, and as indifferent as ever, now that ye have beheld the Son of man coming in the clouds, and heard, as it were, your own names in the shrill summons to his bar--what can I say to you? Indeed I feel that there are no more formidable weapons in the moral armoury; and I can but pray--for there is yet room for prayer--that God would put sensibility into the stone, and give you feeling enough to feel for yourselves."[1]

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[1] Ibid., p. 80.

It has been often said, and more often thought, that little permanent effect is produced simply by hearing a sermon. The ordinary run of sermons seldom have sufficiently distinct features--no "nails and hooks" to fasten into memory. It is significant that hearers of Melvill's sermons could recall after many years the text, the topic and often a pithy phrase. The Rev. George J. Davies gives one such instance. "Of friends who were likely to be able to give me any reminiscences of Melvill, one writes to me: 'I shall never have obliterated from mind the effects of a sermon I heard Henry Melvill preach at Cambridge, in my undergraduate days in the autumn of 1839. That is now twenty-three years, or more, ago, but I not only have a distinct remembrance of his voice and looks as he delivered it, but I can say more; the advice he gave us was stored up by others besides myself, and was a turning point in our lives. The text was Proverbs xiii.20,' "[1] This sermon was called "The Power of Association" from the text, "He that walketh with wise men shall be wise; but a companion of fools shall be destroyed." Two passages may suggest the reason for the great impression which it made. The first is one of the few places where Melvill "gives advice"; "We beseech our youthful hearers, with all the earnestness of one who knows their perils and desires

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[1] G.J. Davies, op. cit., p. 62.

their happiness, that they would not select their companions by brilliancy of wit, fascinating manners, or external advantages; but rather that they would have regard primarily to moral principles, and take it as a rule, never to be swerved from, that no man can be a safe companion who cares nothing for his soul. It may be that in acting on this rule, you will have to do violence to inclination, to deny yourselves much that promises to be pleasant in association, and to expose yourselves to comment and remark. But it is your immortality which is at stake; and this is not to be bartered to secure a lively dialogue, or avert a bitter sneer." And in the same vein he continues, "Walk ye therefore with the wise, with the wise of the dead, with the wise of the living. Be specially careful what authors, what books, you make your companions: never think that the melody of poetry may compensate for its licentiousness, nor the ingenuity of philosophy for its scepticism. . . If ye must have poetry, let it be the manly strain of minstrels who have swept the chords to noble themes, not the voluptuous of those who have been the priests to base passions. If ye must have philosophy, let it be the energetic reasoning of such as worshipped truth, not the insidious essays of those who sought to disguise falsehood. If ye must have history, be conversant with the lives of men illustrious

by their virtues, rather than of those whose title to fame is prostituted genius, or successful villainy."[1]

The above illustrations lifted out of the context and in cold print undoubtedly loose much of the cogency they had when delivered in a church filled with students, and by a man full of the Holy Spirit. They may, however, suggest Melvill's method of preaching to university men. Daniel Moore, Melvill's successor as Golden Lecturer, considered that university preaching provided an "arena for the great preacher's triumphs," and went on to add, "There is majesty in the Gospel of the grace of God, when proclaimed faithfully, which is above all gifts; and not even those of the eminent man we have lost--his genius, his poetry, his logic, all his matchless rhetoric, and all his classic fire--would have availed to saving a single soul, if his whole teaching had not been leavened and pervaded, through and through, with the one central and ever exalted theme, 'Jesus Christ, and Him crucified.'"[2]

The third type of congregation to which Melvill preached might be called the occasional--those audiences which assembled not always on a Sunday for a special purpose, and not always connected with the Church. As a popular and effective pleader for funds, Melvill was often

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1 Melvill, University Sermons, 1839, pp. 70-71.

2 D. Moore, op. cit., pp. 21-23.

called upon. In that capacity he made his greatest impact as a social reformer and in the next chapter we treat this aspect of his ministry; here, however, we are concerned with the methods which he employed on such occasions. A sermon preached for the Military and Naval Bible Society, in which his selection of a text and employment of pictorial, military phraseology, indicates his genius for adapting a message to a particular situation. He preached on Ephesians 6:17, "The sword of the Spirit which is the Word of God," and said, "Of all the similitudes employed in Scripture, none are more frequent than those borrowed from military occupations. Christ is represented as the great Captain of our Salvation, and Christians are the soldiers who fight beneath His banner. Sometimes, indeed, leaving the form of martial exploit, illustration is sought from the surges and waste of waters: life is a sea, and human beings are the mariners tossed upon its surface. War, in one shape or another, is the chief similitude. . . The Christian's state, therefore, it becomes us to consider as a state of warfare."[1] In showing the aptness of likening the Bible to a sword, he pointed out that as a sword is useless so long as it is in the scabbard, so the Bible is useless so long as it is left to rest idle in intellect. Thus the Bible when

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[1] Melvill, Miscellaneous Sermons, vol. I, p. 496.

unsheathed is like a sword in that as the "Christian employs this sword at the commencement of his career, and he procedes not a single step without probing the hearts of his foes with its edge."[1] It is both a defensive and an offensive weapon, for the Christian uses it to defend himself and to cut down his foes.

In concluding this sermon on behalf of the Military and Naval Bible Society, Melvill referred to his father's interest in the society.[2] It is, we believe, the only mention of his family in a published sermon. Here Melvill said, "For myself, I feel a peculiar gratification in pleading however feebly, the cause of this Society. I might say that the cause is one bequeathed to me by an honoured parent, who, during many years of military occupation, found abundant reason to bless God that such a Society existed, bound its interests about the hearts of his family; so that, to be careless of its interests, were to be scornful of his memory." But his entreaty avoided overly sentimental, personal motives which he may have inherited from his father; and he concluded the sermon in these words: "I cannot communicate that private and personal feeling to those whom I address. I cannot urge you to regard the claims of the Bible Society as allied to your spirits by that most solemn of all earthly things--the last wish of a dear and honoured father; but if I cannot urge you by the graves of your ancestry, I can beseech you, by the example of thou-

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[1] Ibid., p. 497,

[2] See above, p. 13.

sands, who, for your defence, died the death of the warriors--I can beseech you by the memory of the mighty dead, whose bones are bleaching on the plains--I can beseech you by drowning navies, and by slaughtered armies--I can beseech you by those buried beneath the mounds of earth, and those sepulchred in the fathomless depths of the sea; and I pray God deeply to affect your hearts by these considerations, and thus to incline you to promote the interests of this Society."[1]

We conclude that in preaching on behalf of a special cause to a particular congregation, his homiletical method was to use terms appropriate to the occasion; but he had said, "I confess that I am not so anxious to preserve the figure, as to present the truth which it suggests."[2]

On occasion Melvill was called upon to preach before congregations which included high ranking dignitaries of the State. For four years, at the invitation of the Duke of Wellington, Melvill preached the anniversay sermon of the Corporation of Trinity House. In 1839, the Lord Mayor and Sheriffs of London assembled to hear him preach on behalf of the Stranger's Friend Society; and as Chaplain to the Queen, he preached before the Court although none of these sermons have survived. In 1855, he delivered a sermon before the House of Commons for which, in a motion proposed

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1 Ibid., p. 501.

2 Ibid., p. 498.

by Lord Palmerston and seconded by Mr. Disraeli, Melvill was thanked, and the House voted to have the sermon printed.[1]

One observation we make on this type of sermon: Melvill never flattered even the most splendid and dignigied and regal congregation. Once when the Duke of Wellington was in the congregation, he preached from Matt. 20:26-28 on the theme that true greatness is the result of serviee. Though such a sentence as "He who would lay himself out for eminence must lay himself out for usefulness," might have been taken as an indirect reference to the duke, Melvill's artful handling of the theme elicits any attention which the duke may have drawn, and the force of the text was brought to bear on the opportunities for Christian service which fell to the men who went down to the sea in ships and carried England's commer-

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[1] the following is the record of this motion, dated House of of Commons--Friday, March 23, 1855.:
LORD PALMERSTON--I rise to make a proposition to the House, which I am sure will be assented to with the greatest pleasure by all those who had the advantage on Wednesday last, of hearing that most eloquent and forcible Discourse which was preached to the House of Commons, at St. Margaret's. That sermon, I am sure, must have so impressed itself upon the minds of those who heard it, as to make any further record, so far as they are concerned, unnecessary: but, I think, that the House will be of the opinion that the admirable topics of that Address, and the excellant manner in which those topics were handled by the Reverend Preacher, entitle us to ask that the Sermon should be printed for the benefit of those who had not the advantage of hearing it; and that the thanks of the House should be given to Mr. Melvil. (Hear, Hear.)
MR. DISRAELI--I rise to second the motion which has been made by the noble Lord, and to express the thanks of the gentlemen upon this side of the House who were present and heard the Sermon, to the Reverend Gentlemen for his animated and impressive Discourse which he delivered upon Wednesday last, on that most important occasion, in our Parish Church. Melvill, Golden Lectures, 1855, No. 2326, p. 141.

cial enterprises to every part of the world. "England's supremacy of the seas gives her an opportunity to evangelize the world." In this connection Melvill foresaw that if as a nation, Britain neglected "blending the character of a Christian and commercial community,"[1] in the sight of God her service would be useless; "It is not easy to repress all forebodings--to keep off anticipating the time when God may visit on us the not having used in His cause the vast powers derived from our traffic; and when this nation may cease to be the greatest among the kingdoms, through having failed to be their servant, ministering the Gospel of God."[2]

When he was speaking before the dignitaries of the State, we sense in Melvill's method the pattern of the prophets. He preached before the House of Commons when England's armies were hard pressed in the Crimean War, and the Queen had proclaimed a day of "solemn Fast, humiliation, and prayer before Almighty God." Melvill, though never one to sell England short on her greatness aid, as a prophet must, boldly proclaim to statesmen that although the country was engaged in a "just and necessary war," we must not "set the goodness of the cause against the misdoings which may have separated us and our God. And without going into the catalogue of national offences, which may all have had a bearing on the

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1 Ibid., Vol. II, p. 597.

2 Melvill, Golden Lectures, 1855, No. 2356, p. 147.

national calamity, it may be that our pride has specially grieved the most High. It may have been in too selfconfident, in too boastful a spirit, that we entered upon war. We saw the sea covered by our magnificent fleets; we knew that our troops were unrivalled in valour; we gloried in our alliance with a chivalrous and mighty nation; but we may have forgotten that the Lord is Lord of hosts, and that it is He, and He only, who giveth salvation unto kings. Let us, then see to it that we now strive, by genuine contrition and humiliation, to turn from us the wrath and to obtain the forgiveness of God; for the worst evil that can fall upon a land, is that God's judgments produce no amendment."[1]

Of Melvill's homiletical method in preaching to the "dignified" congregation, we conclude that his text, choice of words and use of illustration, and the motive for his appeals were peculiarly adapted to the needs and interests of the special occasion, but there is not any evidence of greater preparation or more careful development than usual or any vain display of scholarship and piety. This is perhaps significant for appreciating the character of the man as well as his conception of the office of the minister. His standard of excellence was not effected by the station of those to whom he preached; for his recognition of the

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[1] Ibid.

inestimable worth of every soul in the sight of God always called forth the best in the preacher, irrespective of the eminence of his congregation. Melvill never resorted to gloze for the sake of glory.

It is said that Queen Victoria used to grumble because she felt that Gladstone always addressed her as if she were a public meeting. This story suggests what we have been trying to illustrate in Melvill's homiletical method: one can approach any speech situation either blindly or intelligently and with an awareness of its peculiar characteristics. Some factors, of course, remain constant in every congregation, for it is like the individual soul in its larger contemplation. Every congregation is made up of "sinners in need of a Saviour." We risk the charge of trifling by pointing out that Melvill's method of preaching to a crowd of men did not cloud the real issue of salvation that confronts man, every man. In other words, whether addressing a general congregation, a congregation assembled for some special purpose, or a congregation of marked distinction, Melvill adapted his approach to the occasion, but never allowed method to distort message or to cloud the character of Christ. His method was the servant, never the master, of the Gospel.

Section III

The Sermon Itself

We can now turn to analyizing the constituent parts of the sermon itself and first to the method of preparation. Melvill was notably unlike the popular preacher, who, when criticized for not properly clothing his ideas, exclaimed, "Why, bless you, they are born so quickly I can scarcely put shirts on them." Dr. Gossip says, "A sermon that comes easy or in a rush, usually means that your wheels are travelling in an old rut;"[1] the labour Melvill put into his sermons shows that this also could not be said of him.

Hood and Longwill in their Preacher's Lantern remark, "There were legends floating about concerning the length of time Melvill bestowed on the preparation of his sermons, which were ludicrous, and we suppose simply impossible."[2] The following is an example of what they considered fantastic rumour about Melvill's preparation for preaching. "His discourses ought to be finished compositions," said James Grant in 1839, "for I am assured by those who know him, that on an average he devotes from seven to eight hours a day, during six days of the week, to the preparation of the sermons which he delivers on the Sabbath evening. He shuts himself up in his study, refusing to be seen by any visitors except in very peculiar circumstances, for the above

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1 In Christ's Stead, p. 131.

2 Vol. I, p. 333.

length of time every day, from Monday until Saturday. And when thus completely shut out from the world, as if buried in one of the cloisters of some monastery, he presses all the powers of his mind and all his varied reading into his service, while preparing for his pulpit exhibition on the following Sunday evening. He could not expend more care in their preparation, nor display greater fastidiousness as to his diction, though every sentence he writes were penned under the perfect persuasion, that his sermons, as sermons, were to be co-enduring with the world itself."[1] If such was Melvill's method, we suspect that he was a preacher like Newman, who as a kind of mystical and mysterious figure, unseen through the week, emerged out of the presence of God, uttered his message, and disappeared, owing something of his power to his aloofness from men;[2] but Newman was able to work isolated in a monastic atmosphere, while Melvill worked in his study at Grove House in Camberwell, the father of nine children under fourteen years of age. In view of this we must doubt whether he really needed so much peace, or else bow down in admiration for the solitude Melvill's family afforded him.

On Melvill's sermon preparation there appears to have

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1 The Metropolitan Pulpit, Vol. II, pp. 3-4.

2 A.J. Gossip, op. cit., p. 97.

been considerable conjecture based upon hearsay, and little based upon first hand knowledge; but in the Camden Parish Magazine of 1893, the vicar, Mr. Philip S. O'Brien, has recorded evidence given him by an old friend who frequently stayed with the Melvill family in Grove House. "It was his invariable rule, when living at Camberwell Grove, to dash off, first of all a rough and immensely rapid discourse. This manuscript he then copied, making close and severe alterations where necessary, balancing every period, polishing every sentance, refusing everything that was not musical, harmonious, and calculated to win the ear as well as the heart, and never ending his labour until he had produced a perfect masterpiece of refined and elegant English composition, which even apart from the grandeur of the theme itself, would be received with delight by every cultured and educated hearer. Nor was it all over yet, for, when his sermon had reached the final stage (so far as he was concerned), it was his custom to hand the manuscript to his sister (who resided with him), and she, with the utmost care and precision, copied out the whole sermon in large hand so that it could be read off with the greatest ease in the pulpit."[1]

Criticizing Melvill's method of preparation, Joseph Johnson said that since he was required to preach only one

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[1] Vol. II, No. 2, p. 11.

sermon a week, he was "not only able to weigh every sentence, to compose and recompose it in twenty different ways, but to select the words used from a dictionary of synonyms. By this process, somewhat tedious, if not useless," thought Johnson, "a certain degree of smoothness must of necessity be acquired. Half the trouble might have secured an even more desirable result. It might be that in less elaboration, more point would be obtained, there being some danger that in spreading out the gold leaf, the thing covered might be forgotten."[1]

In the matter of preparation, possibly Melvill did go to extremes, but an explanation may lie in the fact that since he believed that "It pleased God, by the foolishness of preaching to save them that believe," Melvill bent all his efforts toward making his preaching no more foolish than it need be! We do not for a moment think that he considered the service of worship existed solely for the sermon, but he did feel that to please God his sermons required of him his best, and for him to produce his best required inordinately long and meticulous preparation. Either of necessity or from choice, he adopted this method and sacrificed the work of a pastor in order that he might devote all his energy to that of a preacher.

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[1] J. Johnson, Popular Preachers of Our Time, p. 190.

We now turn to the results of Melvill's elaborate preparations.

There is some truth in the statement of one who said, "If I had more time to prepare, my sermons would not be so long;" but this principle does not seem to have applied to Melvill, for his long hours of preparation resulted in lengthy sermons. In the first decade of his ministry, his sermons averaged over 7000 words; if they were typewritten on sheets of paper in the form of this thesis, each sermon would require 36 pages. When Melvill sought the counsel of the Duke of Wellington on preaching to soldiers, he was told, "Be brief and to the purpose;" and his sermons preached in St. Peter's Chapel to soldiers stationed at the Tower of London are shorter than usual, but hardly brief; for they average over 4000 words. In preaching before the University, his sermons averaged 5500 words. The sermons preached as Golden Lecturer to congregations made up of clerks and business men who came to him on Tuesdays during their lunch period, averaged slightly under 7000 words. The two volumnes of sermons preached during the latter years of his life reflect the spirit of the times which called for shorter sermons. Probably Melvill's years of experience had, by then, taught him to say what he had to say more briefly, for these sermons run to approximately 4400 words. His earlier sermons and those preached as Golden Lecturer

lasted from sixty to ninety minutes; yet those who heard him preach say that he never lost his hearers' attention, and, although many left the services exhausted, their exhaustion was more the result of their being magnetized by the man and his message than of the length of the sermon itself.

Before dealing with Melvill's method of sermon construction, we must briefly mention his choice of titles and texts. In selecting a title, Melvill generally tried merely to suggest his theme; for example, "The Danger of Professional Activity Deadening Personal Religion," "A Sense of our Frailty, a Subject for Prayer" and "The Condition Essential to a Walk with God." On occasion, however, he displayed a flare for the dramatic. Probably the most striking example of this is a sermon entitled "The Bird's Nest." Others such as "Divine Arithmetic"; "War in Heaven"; "The Busy-Body"; "Seeking, After Finding" or "The Young Man in the Linen Cloth" serve to suggest Melvill's knack of selecting a title designed to arouse interest.

This element of the unusual seen in his choice of titles is evident also in his selection of texts, but the great bulk of his preaching began with an "old" text upon which he tried to shed "new light" and whose truth he attempted to drive home. There is abundant variety in the

choice of texts, indicating that he was equally at home in the Old and New Testaments. He preached four sermons from Old Testament texts to every seven from the New Testament. Melvill's more unusual texts provoked some criticism, for example: "We cannot acquit out preacher of casuistry; there is too much agility, too much adroitness, and often the result gives the appearance of tight-rope dancing. . . He starts from a strange turn--we had almost said the perversion--of some thought. What a strange text--'The Spirit of God moved upon the face of the waters!' This text was made to do service for a discourse on baptismal regeneration! 'And he commanded that something should be given her to eat'--this was called in to show the necessity of religious education after baptism and before confirmation,"[1] Though these sermons referred to by Hood are not among Melvill's published works, we tend to appreciate what he was driving at; for Melvill's thought did at times gravitate toward the unusual in the selection of title and text, but we have never found evidence of such poor taste as Hood suggests.

On the selection of texts Melvill once said, "There are texts in the Bible which we may have often given up as hopelessly obscure; but with greater experience has come greater light and the dark sayings have burst forth on us

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[1] E.P. Hood, The Lamps of the Temple, pp. 236-237.

as amongst the most brilliant and precious in Scripture."[1] On another occasion he referred to Proverbs 22:6; "Train up a child in the way he should go, and even when he is old he will not depart from it"--and said, "Pleasing as it may be to expiate on so beautiful a promise, and to speak on the consequences, thus broadly affirmed of religious education; still, if there be an suspicion of exaggeration, or even if there be not a persuasion that nothing is said but what experience will verify, the effect of the discourse must at least be unsatisfactory."[2] This may suggest Melvill's method of selecting a text: he waited for experience to verify its truth before venturing to preach on it. A reflection of John Ruskin's substantiates this: "Henry Melvill dutifully forbidding himself any dangerous fields of inquiry, explained with accuracy all that was explicable in his text, and argued the inexplicable into the plausible with great zeal and feeling; always thoroughly convincing himself before he attempted to convince his congregation."[3] As we now take up the subject of Melvill's method of sermon construction it will be necessary to illustrate further his choice and development of texts.

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1 Melvill's Sermons: Latter Years, Vol. I, p. 63.

2 Melvill, Religious Education, p. 4.

3 The Works of John Ruskin, Vol. XXXV, p. 388. In this connection he also added:"It may be noted in passing that Dean Stanley, on the other hand, used his plausibility to convince his congregation without convincing himself, or committing himself to anything in particular; while Fredric Maurice secured his audiences religious comfort by turning their too thorny convictions the other side up, like railway cushions."

Putting the preacher into print was a vogue of the nineteenth century. Such publications as The Penny Pulpit and The Pulpit, to which we are indebted for reporting and preserving many of Melvill's sermons, sought to bring the message of the pulpit to the fireside. The composition of Melvill's sermons indicate that they were not designed for that purpose; in structure and style his sermons are impressive, but in cold print they suffer for want of the preacher's vehement and earnest manner of delivery; still a study of their structure and style reveals that he possessed certain rhetorical gifts and worked on well defined homiletical principles.

In the structure of his sermons, two points stand out: first, there is always a concise statement of purpose, and in pursuing that purpose, Melvill's thought moves according to a plan; second, the same type of methodical craftsmanship shown in his early preaching is to be seen also in his later sermons, and it is clear that the homiletical principles which he adopted as a young man remained intact during his forty years of preaching. If one believes that methodology should be a constant concern of the skilful workman, and sees the disaster of static craftsmanship in a changing world, one is apt to regard Melvill's method as one which refused alteration and hence invited disaster. The evidence, however, indicates that method, though inflexible, served its

purpose, and was as effective at the end of his ministry as it was at the beginning. In Dargan's A History of Preaching, the nineteenth century is divided into three periods (1801-1833, 1833-1868, 1868-1900) and he says, "Robert Hall and Henry Melvill would not have appealed to audiences in the last third of the century as they did to the people of their own times."[1] This opinion is probably true and should be noted, but it does not alter the fact that Melvill's homiletical method engaged the attention of his audiences and earned the respect of contemporary clergymen.

In general, Melvill's sermons were to be found of the exegetical and expository type. In some he followed more the topical, but he never used the discursive approach. It is clear that one is skating on thin ice in any attempt to reduce to a type any particular sermon. We find that the great majority of his sermons are basically textual but include elements of the topical, and the whole is on the solid substance of doctrine and fired with the passion of the evangelist. This quality, evident in most examples of mature preaching, precludes neat classification.

Melvill's sermons have much of the character of a mathematical demonstration. He began with a text of Scripture, and then proceeded to expand the truth into a succession of closely reasoned demonstrations, almost invariably

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[1] E.C. Dargan, Vol. II, p. 471.

ending each demonstration with a restatement of his original text just as a proposition in Euclid ends with q.e.d. Usually one thought dictated the entire structure of a sermon, and his chain of reasoning. Illuminated by apt illustrations, he gathered the threads into one irresistible conclusion in which he seemed to have established uncontrovertibly the truth of the scriptural statement from which he started. His sermons give the impression that all his thought was centred upon the text; he approached it from every angle, he led up to it again and again until its truth was burned on the consciousness of his hearers. In developing a sermon, Melvill demonstrated a technique which many men attempt, but which few use so effectively.

This homiletical principle is difficult to describe adequately and even more difficult to illustrate briefly, for in citing only one link in his development we lose much of the strength in his chain of thought. Nevertheless, a paragraph from the sermon entitled "A Very Lovely Song", on Ezekiel 33:32 may illustrate in a more concrete way what we have attempted to describe. The sermon's theme was this: there is a present power in preaching, but often it has no permanent effects. The idea was developed by showing that under Paul's intrepid preaching, "Felix trembled," but soon settled back into a careless prolifigacy and often

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[1] Ibid., p. 546.

listened to Paul without being affected by his preaching. Melvill then pointed out that on this score Herod surpassed Felix, for he "heard gladly," and in some measure did the things which John prescribed, but Herod's brand of discipleship did not prevent his ordering John's head to be chopped off in order to "keep his faith" and fulfil a foolish promise. Melvill then goes on to speak of those who in weekly assemblings hear descriptions of the sensualist, the revengeful man or the domestic tyrant and feel "they themselves are sitting for a portrait on a seat of thorns, and imagine all around are applying to them the description and recognizing the likeness;" yet, though convicted at the moment by the present power of preaching, depart still in possession of their "darling sin", their cherished habits unbroken, and the less powerful desires for amendment repressed. This briefly shows the path of Melvill's thought, but what we proposed to quote was a paragraph displaying the punch with which he applied the text. "We have," he said, "the Jews thronging around Ezekiel; thronging in their impenitence; thronging in their determined adherence to their idolatries and vices. And the Prophet is not sparing in his denunciations. He is not prophesying smooth things, saying, 'Peace, Peace, when their is no peace.' Are the Jews painfully affected? Since they are resolved to give no heed to Ezekiel, do they

not, at least, turn away in insolence and disgust resolving that they will never listen again to the sayings of so wild an enthusiast? Nothing of the sort! There they sit, like fascinated things; they come again and again as to an intellectual treat, or to a fine exhibition of genius; and God has to say--here is what we must consider and account for--God has to say to this stern messenger from whom, you may have thought the cold and the careless would have instinctively shrunk, "Lo, thou art unto them as a very lovely song of one that hath a pleasant voice, and can play well on an instrument: for they hear thy words, and they do them not.'"[1] We suspect that those who heard him preach this sermon left with the text ringing in their ears, for they heard it seven times, subtlely suggested and placed at the climax of a masterly chain of argument, and finally were dismissed with its haunting refrain.

As an expository preacher, Melvill frequently departed from the well trodden paths of Scripture, and some have singled out his able treatment of the less prominent facts and references in the sacred story as his most distinguishing work. We shall cite three sermons representative of this type of exposition. (1) "The rich shall not give more, and the poor shall not give less, than half shekel, when they give the offering of Jehovah, to make atonement for

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[1] Melvill's Sermons: Latter Years, Vol. I, p. 106.

your souls."(Exodus 30:15) This was the text which he selected for a sermon entitled "Half Shekel Atonement" in which he showed that the beggar in all his wretchedness and the monarch in all his splendour stand on the same step before the throne of Grace. In showing that God requires equal homage of all men, Melvill then illuminates this Old Testament text by a brilliant display of New Testament truth designed to show that all men are equally in need of Christ's atonement. (2) Another illustration from one of the byways of Scripture is found in a sermon on this text, "If the iron be blunt, and he do not whet the edge, then he must put to more strength; but wisdom is profitable to direct." (Eccles. 10:10) He develops this sermon along more topical lines and shows that work with tools dulled by use, can only result in increased labour and sooner or later even the man with a strong back and a weak mind will be exhausted and frustrated to the point of despair. Melvill then points out that the wise man will pause long enough in his labour to bring his tools to the grindstone and give them a new edge which not only lightens his work but enables him to prosper. Practical applications of the text are obvious; Melvill developed these two, that there is a whetting of the edge by relaxation, and a whetting of the edge by religion. (3) Finally, we mention a sermon which he preached on Acts 19:19. In this exposition he

carried forth the idea that in burning the magical books, the Ephesian Christians gave evidence of their conversion. They publicly showed that they hated the sins which they formerly lived. Had they saved a few as collectors' items, they would have indicated a lurking affection; but they burned them all and counted the cost after they were destroyed.

In pointing out to his congregation that they too had "books of magic", he repeatedly challenged his hearers with the question, "Have you burnt your books of magic?"

The above illustrations taken from sermons preached on less prominent references made in Scripture, show the fertility of Melvill's mind; and that his study of the Bible was such that he was ever alert to the preaching values of passages frequently emphasized.

Now to attempt a more specific analysis of the structure of his sermons. First, we shall examine his method of introduction. One reason why St. Paul's Mars' Hill sermon failed was that he spent too much time getting to the marrow of the Gospel; in other words, his introduction was too long. Occasionally, Melvill made the same mistake. This happened more frequently in his early sermons, where an opening blast of polemic sometimes got out of hand and proclamation was deferred in favour of an apologetic, which may seem effective enough; but one wonders if any apology for the faith ever makes a Christian. Even in his early

sermons, this error is the exception rather than the rule; and as his preaching method matured with experience, he wasted no time in getting to the point.

We shall mention four of the many ways in which Melvill opened a sermon: (1)Probably his most usual method was, after reading the text, to make some reference to the hearers' knowledge of it; for example: "You will all remember. . .", "You will at once perceive. . ." or, less personal but of the same type, "There are few Scripture narratives with which men are, for the most part, better acquainted than with that of the conversion of the jailer at Phillippi." (2) A reference to the Church's year introduced many of his sermons; the following example is characteristic of Melvill's direct approach; and one of the few passages which suggests that Melvill may have had a sight sense of humour. "This day is devoted by our church to the commemoration of the last of the apostles thus named--Matthew, the publican. (i.e. from the text Matt. 10:3) In the gospel for the day, which has been just read to you, you have an account of the calling of Matthew. Christ found him sitting at the 'receipt of custom;' bade him follow him, and was immediately obeyed. We have no authentic information in regard to Matthew, the apostle and evangelist, beyond that which is furnished by the brief notices in the gospels. It appears from these that he was descended from Jewish parents, and

that, according to a custom very usual with the Jews, he bore two names--that of Levi as well as that of Matthew. His profession was that of a publican, or a tax-gatherer; for we need hardly explain to you, that those who are called publicans in the New Testament, were the collectors of taxes imposed by the Romans, and not publicans in the modern sense of the word."[1]

We might label Melvill's third type of introduction--the surprise approach. In a sermon entitled "Jabez" on the text I Chron. 4:9,10, he began with these words: "If we had to fix on a portion of Scripture which might be removed from our Bibles without being much missed, we should probably select the first nine chapters of this first Book of Chronicles."[2] In this novel way he led up to a text taken from a long catalogue of genealogies usually condeded to be as dry as dust and as barren as Baal.

Occasionally Melvill opened his sermon with reference to a life situation. Preaching as Golden Lecturer on the first Tuesday after the Duke of Wellington's funeral, Melvill, speaking on one of his favourite themes, death, introduced it this way: "Come then, whilst the recollection of that wondrous scene is fresh within us, whilst some at least, amongst us still seem to hear those thrilling strains

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1 Melvill, Golden Lectures, 1852, No. 1964, p. 53.

2 Melvill, Sermons on Less Prominent Facts, Vol. I, p. 361.

which wailed through the mighty edifice, as slowly--and almost awfully--the body of the great chief descended to its grave, and let us muse on death as vanquished and overcome; so that, if we cannot imitate the deeds of the glorious dead, we may, at least, prepare for that world which is fast gathering into its bosom all that is truly noble and illustrious upon earth."[1]

Dr. George Buttrick once said to a group of students in Princeton Seminary that in writing the first draft of a sermon it is the introduction which is apt to suffer most as a result of the time required for warming up. He said the first page might well be tossed into the waste-basket and the congregation would never be the wiser for what they missed and chances are they would suffer less because the sermon would be introduced in a more direct, striking and pungent manner. A study of Melvill's method of introduction leads us to the suspicion that some of his long hours of preparation may have been spent in writing frothy introductions whose destiny was the waste-basket, and which were replaced by the models we now see in his published sermons.

Henry Sloane Coffin says that "The most damaging criticism which can be levelled at any sermon is that the preacher was aiming at nothing in particular and proving himself an accurate shot."[2] Whatever may be the path of the traject-

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[1] Melvill, Golden Lectures, 1852, No. 1994, p. 285.

[2] What to Preach, pp. 155-156.

ory in the sermon itself, of Melvill we can emphatically say that he never failed to take accurate aim. It was his invariable practice to follow up the introduction immediately with a statement of his purpose. His division was usually determined by the text; or if that was not possible or desirable, he made a division based on the subject itself. In a sermon on Proverbs 22:6, he defines his purpose in this way: "The text contains a precept and a promise--let these constitute our topics of discourse. In other words, let us examine, in the first place, THE PRECEPT Solomon here delivers, 'Train up a child in the way he should go;' and then secondly, THE PROMISE that would encourage us to obedience, 'And when he is old, he will not depart from it.'"[1] Again, a division suggested by a text but designed in terms which can be remembered as easily as a two-line poem. The"heart"of this sermon on I John 5:10 is that "The whole Bible may be epitomised as exhibiting man's state by nature, and man's state by grace. Let us seize on these two grand divisions," he said, "and let us labour to show you that 'he that believeth on the Son of God hath the witness in himself:' First, to THE RUIN consequent on transgression; and secondly, to THE RESCUE perfected by redemption."[2] A final specimen

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[1] Melvill, Miscellaneous Sermons, vol. II, p. 561.

[2] Melvill, Golden Lectures, 1852, No. 1981, p.186.

to illustrate his method of division and statement of purpose is on a text and about a subject which most modern Protestant preachers avoid altogether, or at least approach with such caution that no definite purpose becomes evident. The text is Luke 16:19, 20 and the subject Dives and Lazarus. This is Melvill's intrepid approach: "In the first place, we shall endeavour to set before you what may be gathered from the history[1] of Dives and Lazarus--In regard to the condition of the human soul when separated from the body. In the second place, we shall consider the alleged fact, that the visit of a messenger from the grave would have no lasting effect upon those who remain persuaded by Moses and the prophets."

Melvill's concise statement of his purpose in a sentence or two undoubtedly proved helpful to those who heard him preach, and anyone who has occasion to search through the volumnes of his sermons for a particular theme is grateful to him for including an affirmation of intent which he faithfully followed.

Having indicated how Melvill planned his work, we shall now see how he worked his plan. Except for the divisions announced after the introduction, we find that in

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[1] It is worth noting here that in the introduction of this sermon Melvill avoided alienating the attention of any who might have definite ideas on the subject as to whether this passage should be interpreted as history or parable. And said,"We speak of it as a parable, or history, without taking upon ourselves to decide which term is the more appropriate. . . .We are sure, whether it be history or parable, that the representation of the consequences of actions in another state of being must be in every way accurate; and it is upon this representation that the chief interest lies. Miscellaneous Sermons, vol. I, p. 462.

the body of the sermon he kept headings of the mechanical type out of sight. In other words there ar e no psychologically questionable announcements such as these: "I propose. . .Point one. . .Point two. . .Point three. . Let us, therefore. . ." Divisions when stated in the body of the sermon are usually found in the opening sentence of a paragraph which contains a new or subordinate thought. Hood reflects that in Melvill's sermons "the logical formulary is preserved, although is not often seen--the drapery is too thick for that but in the perusal of the discourse we find how completely the preacher himself is bound to dialectical form. . .We cannot always disprove his logic, but we seldom feel it."[1] What Hood says about seldom feeling the form is true, and we believe that in another comment upon Melvill's literary style he suggests the reason: "The imagery did not hang like foliage upon a stemless tree; it decorated richly though not gracefully, and far too gorgeously, the porches of thought."[2] Though Melvill stated his purpose admirably and pursued a deliberate plan, these virtues were sometimes impaired by too many words, and too many long and involved sentences in his attempt to upholster the framework. A quick glance over some of Melvill's written sermons gives an impression like that of meeting a

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1 E.P. Hood, op. cit., pp. 218-219.

2 Ibid.

very fat man: when you shake his hand you are convinced that he has bones, but looking at him you marvel how well they are hidden; only an X-ray of such a man would reveal his structure; likewise, closer study reveals the framework in the body of most of Melvill's sermons.

By today's homiletical standards in the matter, method and use of illustration, Melvill's sermons would hardly pass muster. We find that his favourite method of illustration was of the "let us suppose type,"(though he never puts it so crudely as this) where a person, condition, or event is suggested out of an imaginative mind rather than from an observant eye. Occasionally material is drawn from history, and most often about who lived, fought and died that either their country or their Church might stand. References to real life situations are few and far between, but when used are effective, partly because of their factual freshness, and partly just because he used them so seldom. If only because of his preliminary readings at Cambridge, we have reason to suspect that Melvill was acquainted with the world's best literature, but he never, so far as we know, quoted from it. In this respect he resembles other masters in the art of preaching such as Robertson and Brooks.

The primary purpose of an illustration is to illuminate; and although Melvill's sermons may be deficient in illust-

ration as generally understood, on examining his literary style and seeing the "word pictures" he painted, we may conclude that though orthodox illustration is scanty, there is no lack of illumination.

Melvill opened his sermons well and closed them even better. Though time has solved some problems he tackled; though some of his methods now call for modification; illustrations which he used are dated and dead; yet Melvill's method of making claims for Christian commitment displays timeless relevance. Since such claims are most evident in his sermon conclusions, they furnish material for profitable study. His conclusions were generally short, pertinent, and trenchant, and in them the aim of the sermon is fulfilled. Whatever may have been his faults in developing a sermon, he never, in concluding it, left his hearers dangling or undecided as to what his purpose was.

We are able to distinguish certain motifs which Melvill frequently weaves into his closing appeal. Some form of eschatological emphasis is usually dominant. Sometimes it is in the rewards which heaven offers, and at other times the penalties which hell extracts; often there is shown the glorious expectancy that should await Christ's coming as well as the frightful consequences of the "judgment." Preaching on the "fishers of men" text in Matthew's Gospel, Melvill concluded: "Assuredly the day of the Lord will

come, and just as assuredly when it cometh it will come as 'a thief in the night.' It may then come in our own lifetime; even now the chords of the net may be in the hands of the angels, and they may but wait the divine mandate to draw to the land. We give it to you as fresh incentive to diligence and vigilance in your spiritual calling, that the Lord may come whilst you are yet numbered with the living. It is not much to tell you that you cannot reckon on tomorrow, that you are bound to be earnest in working out salvation, inasmuch as you know that a single day is left you in which to secure immortality. But, practically there is but little force in what ought to be so startling. Sudden death is comparatively very rare, and so long as men do not feel that sickness is at work upon their frames, they can hardly persuade themselves of the possibility that death may be at hand. But we now tell you, that whilst the pulse is beating strongly, and the eye is not dim, and the spirit is not broken, there may be heard the cry, 'Behold the Judge standeth at the door.' We tell you that sickness may be far off, that death may be far off, and yet nevertheless you are not sure of another day of probation. Whilst not near the grave, you may be within a hair-breadth of judgment. So that the doctrine of Christ's advent doubles, as it were the likelihood of sudden death; and we send you to your homes to muse on the

two probabilities; the first, that you have but a short time to live; the second, that a little while and Christ may come to judgment. The 'fishers of men' have been busy with all of us; all of us are enclosed within the net; the meshes are around us; so that we must be judged as Christians and not as heathens. Oh! will it be found at last, that we are only bound the tighter for the burning: or will it not rather be found--God grant that it may--that God has verified in our experience his gracious words to the Jews: 'I drew them with the cords of a man, with the bands of love.'"[1]

A passage such as this illustrates the eschatological type of conclusion which is common and cannot be regarded as a ragged whim of any particular period of his ministry. Sometimes the tone was more harsh; occasionally it sounded on a more subtle note. He followed no set pattern in his appeals but seldom did the wall between the here and the hereafter prevent him from looking to the other world while preaching to men's needs in this world. Melvill felt that to deal faithfully with the Gospel of the New Testament, the minister was required to proclaim, "Away with the delicacy which would not mention hell lest it should offend the sinner's ears."[2]

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1 Melvill, Golden Lectures, 1856, No. 2673, p. 120.

2 Melvill, Miscellaneous Sermons, Vol. I, p. 460.

In order to avoid leaving the impression that eschatological thought warped his approach in making claim for Christ, we must examine other motifs to be found in his sermon conclusions. It has been said that a preacher can count on at least one broken heart in every congregation, For the most part, Melvill's ministry neglected the person who came for comfort; his fear of applying the "balm of the gospel before a need is felt for a Mediator" may have dissuaded him. We cite one instance where he did carry his people back to listen to the words of that man who knew so much about sorrow, and who learned from it to "Glory in tribulations, knowing that tribulation worketh patience, and patience experience, and experience hope." Melvill says that St. Paul's "congratulations were more likely to have been heard, when sorrow had broken as an armed man into a household, and grief had set up its abode like one who did not mean to be speedily or easily dislodged."[1] In closing this sermon, he says of the ministry of suffering, "Do not shrink if there be signs of the disturbing of the external peacefulness, if the clouds begin to gather, and God seems about to give you 'bread of adversity, and the water of affliction.' Rather receive it with a solemn joy, with a thankful submission. There are other forms which attend its sad and measured march besides those of anxiety and

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[1] Melvill, Lectures, (New Edition), 1876, Vol. I, p. 350.

anguish. As it approaches palled in deep night, there are other voices which fall on the listening ear of faith besides those which swell and shriek and mingle in the dirge. The spirit of the departed righteous throng about calamity as it turns its fatal step towards the believer's door. Their utterance it is which is so distinctly and sweetly heard amid the murmurings of the gathering storm, 'O child of God, wouldst thou be without chastisement, whereof all are partakers?' Wouldst thou forget thy Master's words, 'In the world ye shall have tribulations, but be of good cheer, I have overcome the world'? Wouldst thou be an exception to an experience whereof all we are witnesses--ay, and the Son of consolation it was who spake these words--'that through much tribulation must men enter into the kingdom of God.'"[1]

It is to the Cross that Melvill points in the conclusion of many sermons, for he felt that by viewing the scene where "the just died for the unjust," men are most likely to hear God's call to repentance and claim to obedience. From the pulpit he seldom sought to intervene in men's lives and prescribe a moral standard for them, for he believed that "wits are never so sharp as when vices are accused,"[2] and morals cannot be imposed; but "The sight of Jesus," insisted Melvill, "pierced by and for our sins, is the great

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[1] Ibid.

[2] Melvill, Miscellaneous Sermons, Vol. II, p. 661.

preservative against our yielding to the pleadings of a corrupt nature. One glance at the Cross would make us pause in the pursuit of a bauble, bring confusion of face at our daring to be sensual, and fill us with self-reproach that we could desire what is perishable."[1]

In making appeals to the conscience, Melvill said, "We are aware that some men are more accessible through one channel and some through another; and therefore would we try all varieties of attack. . We believe it to be our duty to strive to be 'all things to all men', and therefore at one time to lay seige to the intellect, at another to the affections--now to deal with the understanding, and then with the imagination."[2] Calling upon the ministry of angels for assistance was one of his most striking approaches through the avenue of imagination. "There are angels amongst us;" he once said, "they have marked our worship; they have given heed to the effect of the preached word; and noware they just ready to spring from the earth, to hasten back to the immediate presence of God. Whilst their wings are yet folded, whilst they are still intent on searching out God's wisdom, as made known by the Church, will not some one individual yield himself a subject to Christ and surrender his heart as a new trophy of redeeming

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1 Melvill, Lectures, (New Edition), 1876, Vol. II, p. 720.

2 Melvill, Miscellaneous Sermons, Vol. II, p. 242.

love? Oh! there are no tears in heaven; but when angels come down to earth, it may be, they can fall into companionship with human sadness, and even learn to weep; and where is the spectacle which shall wring tears from eyes which they were never meant to stain, if it be not that of the obstinate rejection of the gospel of reconciliation, and of careless trifling with a thing so inestimably precious as the soul? Old men, busied with your gold! angels weep over you. Young men, frittering away your days in vanities and pleasures! angels weep over you. . .(but) attendant angels wait to see--oh! that it may be so! the Word already working; and they hasten to climb the starry battlements, and wake a chorus of praise from their glorious conclaves. The Lord grant in his own good time, that we may all heighten this blessed minstrelsy, and all join in the new song,'the song of Moses and of the Lamb.'"[1]

Not all men have the gift of being able to teach Christ's religion and challenge hearers to make decisions, but Melvill had; he was a fisher of men and he used hooks with barbs. His imagination never grew dull nor his method routine in expounding God's good news. He sought in the last few minutes of a sermon to isolate the individual from the crowd and there, with God as a witness, he unburdened his soul of what it had seen so that what could not be

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[1] Melvill, Golden Lectures, 1856, No. 2528, p. 810.

taught might be caught. At times he talks obliquely, but in conclusion there is always the direct, decisive claim made on the I-thou basis.

Section IV

Literary Style

This study of Melvill's preaching has shown the breadth and depth of his theological thought, and the homiletical craftsmanship he displayed in building sermons from biblical truth and knowledge of the human heart. In what has already been said, and from the passages of his work already quoted, the reader has no doubt formed an impression of Melvill's style. Shall we say of it that at times it is redundant, or shall we claim it to be massive, elevated and billowy? However it may be labelled, it was certainly his own. Wise imitators of Melvill, some of whom went so far as to preach his sermons word for word,[1] soon found the danger of attempting imitation, and settled for admiration. It has also been said of him that he was greatly influenced by Thomas Chalmers, Edward Irving, and by the chaste eloquence of Robert Hall.[2] At the time of Hall's death, Melvill expressed in one of his sermons his sense of admiration for Hall's work and of the loss which the church suffered on his transfer from the congregation

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[1] Memorials, p. 62. Monier-Williams reports that Melvill once went for a holiday to the Cumberland lakes with his daughters. "On Sunday they attended a country church where a young curate conducted the sermive. Upon seeing Melvill, the curate turned pale and looked very disconcerted, for as it turned out he had and did preach one of Melvill's old sermons."

[2] Hood and Longwill, The Preacher's Lantern, Vol. I, p. 341.

below to the congregation above. To what degree Melvill may have been influenced by Chalmers we have no way of knowing. On this matter James Grant made the observation that, "Mr. Melvill is often charged with plagiarism; and the party whose matter he is represented as chiefly borrowing, is Dr. Chalmers. That the reverend gentleman has chosen the Scotch Doctor as t he model of his pulpit ministrations, no one who knows the two divines can for a moment doubt. Neither is it to be denied that Mr. Melvill is a most successful imitator of Dr. Chalmers, in the character of his illustrations and the construction of his phraseology. The difference between the two is this: that while the conceptions of Dr. Chalmers are more striking, and his eloquence more sustained than those of Mr. Melvill, the diction of the latter, artificial though it be, is far more correct than that of the northern theological giant. I can conceive it quite possible, that the minister of Camden Chapel may be an imitator of the theological professor of the University of Edinburgh, without committing a felony on his ideas. Others, however, assure me that they have detected numerous plagiarisms on the part of Mr. Melvill from the works of Dr. Chalmers."[1]

Interesting though it would be to pursue further a study of the influence Chalmers may have had on Melvill,

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[1] J. Grant, op. cit., p. 14.

it is not our intention to do so here, and we shall leave it at this: one can read sermons which Chalmers preached and reflect on parts of them, "Melvill might have said that and even express it in the same style of language;" one can also read sermons of Barrow or Horsley, who may also have influenced his style, and have the same feelings; but what does this prove? Surely that Melvill looked to the great masters of the art of preaching and learned from them the secrets of their power; and one of their secrets which he must have appreciated and developed was that style is not idle; in it is power. Truth is far more likely to penetrate to the heart if it is conveyed in words carefully chosen for their bite and cutting edge. Choosing the right word, coining the telling phrase, and developing a word picture, are gifts which come in a measure to some and which others need to cultivate at the cost of effort. Not only from what we know of Melvill's laborious method of preparation, but also from the impression we receive from reading his printed sermons, we suspect that for him style was something he worked to develop and never ceased working to maintain.

The words he chose could sometimes have been simpler and more telling, but it is far easier for us to find words wisely and effectively chosen, and phrases that sing their way into the soul. In speaking of a mentally sick child, he might have used the word idiot--in his day such a word,

even in a sermon, would have startled no one--but he chose to say, "God left a child in intellectual night;"[1] of again he referred to fasting as "sack cloth on the soul."[2] The following illustrations from his sermons show that Melvill was alert to make the most of an opportunity, and able to make the potentially drab idea dance forth in delightful phrases such as these: "staunch and sterling religion"; "garbled Christianity"; "moral midnight"; "high priest of vice"; "burning to bring glory to God"; "apostle of infidelity"; tinctured with the docrine of transmigration"; and "assasins of language."

Melvill once spoke to Cambridge men on the power of speech. "Amazing faculty!" he said, "That I can now stand in the midst of a thronging assembly, and use the air which we breathe to convey to every one the thoughts which crowd the hidden chambers of my soul! That I can Knock wherewith at every man's conscience and heart; transposing myself, as it were, into those inapproachable solitudes, filling them with the images which are passing to and fro in my own spirit, or causing kindred forms to rise and stir in hundreds that are round me! Yea, speech is wonderful, but not wonderful enough to describe itself."[3] Melvill not only senses the difficulty of describing speech itself; on attempting

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1 Melvill's Sermons:Latter Years, Vol. I, p. 296.

2 Ibid, p. 142.

3 Melvill, University Sermons, 1839, p. 8.

to describe the Act of God on the Cross of Calvary: he says, "you will remember that the love of the Creator was too vast for the expression of an angel or an archangel's speech--that it could not be stated in language, and could not be represneted in action--that words even now are altogether powerless; and that the Cross itself, and the nails, and the wounds, must still be left to their own dumb, but overpowering oratory. . ."[1]

Quotations illustrative of Melvill's power to use the spell of language might here be given, but these could not present at all adequately the magnificence of his literary style; it can only be fully appreciated by one who reads more at length in the sermons preached during his ministry. Some sermons will stand out above others, sharp phrases will stick in the mind, vivid word pictures will remain impressed on the heart, but the larger and more telling impression is apt to be that here was a great soul striving to interpret and impress great thoughts through the inadequate medium of speech.

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[1] Melvill, Golden Lectures, No. 2047, p. 289.

CHAPTER V

Melvill And His Times

In the two preceding chapters, we have attempted to show what Melvill had to say and how he said it. His message we have seen to be one of power, and we have noticed certain homiletical principles which served him in proclaiming a message of power for the inspiration and instruction of men. In this chapter our purpose will be to discover the influence of Melvill's preaching on his times.

Section I

Preaching Needs

As the century opened, wearisome worldliness in the Church cramped preaching, and prejudiced many who were hoping for something real and alive to be born in the Church. In general, religion had run into a surface-shell of form and existed as a barnacle on the surface of life. The message of the Bible was interpreted in a stale, flat and unprofitable way which could only leave souls dying of inanition. Many of the ills which had constipated preaching in the first quarter of the century were purged by the movements of thought between 1825 and 1875, the approximate period of Melvill's ministry. Though keenly aware of the danger inherent in oversimplification, we shall venture to suggest questions which were raised and in so far as they were answered, proved the catharsis needed to clear the issues that clogged the message and mission of the Church,

which enabled her more adequately to meet the ecclesiastical, social, and political needs of the time.

First, was the problem of establishment: did the Established Church deserve the support which she received from the State? When threatened with disestablishment, the leaders in the Church of England were compelled not only to define and proclaim vigorously her apostolic nature, but also to increase the effectiveness of her ministry. Though her critics were never completely silenced, improvements within the Church of England relieved the situation enough to allow for the raising, about 1833, of a new question which was reflected in the activities of the Oxford Movement and which ultimately had to be faced: was the Church of England in schism, or was she not? Over this issue the flood gates opened, and there poured out thought which swept some into the Church of Rome: but those who remained in the Church of England preached with a new conviction that the Via Media which she maintained supplied the need for a proper balance between Rome and Geneva. A third question opened anew the problem of the authority of the Scriptures. The historical and critical movement which began in the eighteenth century forced, in the latter half of the nineteenth an awakened interest in the Bible, which resulted not only in better biblical preaching but in a firmer grasp of historic Christianity and a more practical and effective method of interpreting and applying it. A fourth question,

though difficult to frame, was asked: and in some measure an answer was begun: the question of what was to be the Church's stand on the social and political ills of the times.

These questions, we believe, briefly suggest the dominant needs which any preacher between 1825 and 1875 should have recognized. Now we shall relate Melvill's preaching to these needs as they are reflected in the ecclesiastical, social and political issues which prevailed during the period of his ministry.

Section II

Protestant Reformer

For some reason, which his early sermons fail to disclose, some writers suggest that Melvill's position as a Protestant was questionable. James Grant goes so far as to classify his thought as "semi-popish."[1] An anonymous writer in the Churchmen's Monthly Review and Chronicle says, "We have doubted at times how far we could depend upon him: we knew that his ardent mind had been caught by that deceptive watch-word,--'Church Principles'--and, from some of his communications, we had not a few misgivings whether he might not be eventually found in the enemies' camp."[2] Whatever evidence there may have been of Melvill's indecision, we see that as early as 1834, his position as a Protestant was unmistakably clear when he refuted the charge of the Romanists that the Reformed Church is but a novice in

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1 J. Grant, The Metropolitan Pulpit, Vol. II, p.15.

2 October 1847, p. 730.

the field of religion and can trace its roots only as far back as Luther. He said, "We are quite ready to meet the Roman Catholic on the ground of antiquity; and to decide the goodness by deciding the oldness of our paths. . . The Romish Church we contend to be the old Church decayed, and 'daubed with untempered mortar;' the Reformed Church, that same Church, only repaired and cleansed from the unsound additions of dark and dissolute ages."[1]

The entry in Dr. George Corrie's diary for May 1, 1836, mentions that a new era was introduced on that day when a Select Preacher before the University of Cambridge preached the first sermon against Popery. In his opinion it was neither "forcible, judicious, nor well informed." His concluding reflection was, "From this time I doubt not that Popery will often be mentioned in the University pulpit. It will be well if preachers read before they write and speak."[2] In November of that same year, Melvill served as Select Preacher and what references he made to the mounting tension between Protestantism and Popery indicate that he was not guilty of speaking on a subject of which he was uninformed; for we shall see that Melvill's strategy and thought were vitally pertinent in his day and are still relevant.

Before pointing out fundamental issues which were at stake, it is important that we observe three principles

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1 Melvill, Miscellaneous Sermons, Vol. III, p. 262.

2 M. Holroyd, Memorials of the Life of George Elwes Corrie, D.D., p. 49.

which Melvill repeatedly emphasized. First, in a sermon on the anniversary of the Gunpowder Plot, he showed that he was no hollow-headed rabble rouser when he said, "I am no friend to the perpetuating of quarrels, or to the keeping up of observances which are only calculated for the keeping up of irritated feelings: . . but far less would I be a party to silence, which might be construed into an admission that there is no important difference between Protestantism and Popery."[1] Second, Melvill never spoke uncharitably of Roman Catholics as persons, for he was ever careful to distinguish between the system and those by whom it was held. . . but, he said, "the east is not farther from the west than the Christianity of the Council of Trent is from the Christianity of Cranmer and Ridley."[2] Third, "The times are such," he insisted, "that even the unlettered have need to know something of this controversy, and we must throw truth into a more portable shape, if we hope to gain for it any general attention."[3]

Of one of Melvill's most important sermons on the subject, George G. Davies said: "His sermon on 'Protestantism and Popery' which is a long one of 35 pages, and exhausts the subject (as it probably did the hearers), was called up by the agitation for Catholic Emancipation."[4] Preaching on the

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1 Melvill, Miscellaneous Sermons, Vol. II, p. 534.

2 Ibid., p. 541.

3 J.H. Hopkins, Church of Rome, intr. by H. Melvill, p. vii.

4 G.J. Davies, Successful Preachers, p. 57.

striking text, "If it be possible, as much as lieth in you, live peaceably with all men,"(Rom. 12:18), Melvill said, "We have selected our text in preference to many which might seem more appropriate, because we consider that every point on which it is important that your minds be strengthened or informed is involved in the question; Can we, as disciples of Christ, live peaceably with Rome?"[1] He believed that this text, when applied to the Church, demands that there be no schism or separation, so long as principles are not sacrificed for the sake of keeping peace; but he showed by rigid demonstration that separation had become an absolute duty, and that if protest had been avoided for the sake of peace, there would have been surrender of the principles of the Gospel of Christ.

The tenets of the Roman Church against which Melvill protested so vigorously are summed up in a paragraph whose wording is found to be identical in two different sermons.[2] It would suffer by abridgment and is quoted in full. "We protest against the doctrine of the Pope's infallibility--unsupported by Scripture, proved false by facts--that offers the Divine sanction to every error which ignorance or ambition may adopt, to every practice which avarice may enjoin. We protest against what we count the idolatry of the Papists, their worshipping of images; for, however they may say that they render no homage to the image before which they bow,

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[1] Melvill, Sermons, New Edition, 1872, Vol. II, p. 57.

[2] Melvill, Miscellaneous Sermons, "Commemoration of National Mercies", Vol. II, p. 539; Sermons Preached on Public Occasions, "Broken Cisterns", Sermon No. 12.

but only to the invisible God, this is literally what God punished as idolatry in the Israelites, who, when they fell down before the golden calf, professedly designed to worship on Jehovah. We protest against the doctrine of transubstantiation--the bread and wine in the Lord's Supper being actually turned to Christ's flesh and blood. If it were not contradicted by our senses, it is fatal to the Gospel, for it makes His body omnipresent, and thus interferes with the truth of His humanity. We protest against what is called 'the sacrifice of the mass;' for we hold that Christ was offered once for all, and it is impious to speak of the repetition of His oblation. We protest against the Romish doctrine of justification; for the Papists mix up human merits with Christ; they draw a distinction between venial and mortal sins; they introduce an immense train of subordinate mediators, so that, as I remember a dying Roman Catholic saying to me, and a clergyman of the church, 'O, sir, there were so many between me and Christ, that I could never get a sight of the Saviour.' And thus have they darkened the whole Gospel with their inventions, and substituted, for the simple mode of acceptance prescribed by the Bible, a complicated one of their own, which, if it does not shut all who admit it out of heaven, makes it marvellous how they should enter. We protest against the doctrine of purgatory; we protest against the multiplied sacraments, against denying the cup to the

laity; against keeping the Bible from the common people; against praying in an unknown tongue; we protest against the indecencies of the confessional; we protest against all these, because, though there may not be in all the same amount of error, there is much opposed to pure Christianity, and much likely to place the soul in peril."[1]

Such protests on the part of Melvill make it unmistakably clear that before the Church of England could offer the right hand of fellowship to Rome, the Pope would have to do more than stand outside the door and whistle.

Melvill is careful to distinguish between what he calls real and popular Protestantism. With a back-hand slap at Dissenters who would pull down the fabric of Rome without culling the treasures which may be hidden in the ruins, he regards the motto of such an abortive brand of Protestantism as Diruit. Real Protestantism, of the type to be found in the Church of England, has as its motto, Diruit, Edificat. He introduced a sermon on "The Annunciation of the Blessed Virgin" by saying that "Protestants in their zeal to shun whatever bears a resemblance to Popery may be said to reject, not only error but truth. . .there is often more of partisanship, than the love of truth--more of prejudice than of principle."[2]

Though Melvill's attack on Romanism was for the most

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1 Ibid.

2 Melvill, Miscellaneous Sermons, Vol. II, p. 572.

part on the doctrinal level, we see in a tract which he wrote on Ireland that it was also directed at practical consequences of the system. He attributes Ireland's wretchedness solely to the Roman Catholic religion.[1] She was degraded, and half-civilized, and her resources lay undeveloped, because it is the "very genius of this religion to keep a rude population still rude, just because it keeps them still in ignorance." He considered the Irish problem to be religious rather than political. As the country was "morally benighted," the landlord had his excuse for absenteeism, "that curse and drain of the land," and the capitalist had his excuse for not risking his property in schemes which would improve the country, with the result that "the springs of national prosperity will remain choked and dried up; and all for the want of that moral influence amongst the people, which can only be produced by diffusing the knowledge of the true religion of Jesus. . .Ireland can become thoroughly civilized only by being thoroughly Christianized."[2]

For five years Parliament stood divided, and wrangled over the temporal aspects of the Irish Church question. The Duke of Wellington saw the real issue more clearly than many of his contemporaries when he said in 1838, "The real question that now divides the country and truly divides the house of

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1 Y. Brilioth, The Anglican Revival, p. 97 says that in the 1830's, of Ireland's 8,000,000 inhabitants, 6,400,000 were Roman Catholics.

2 The Rev. H. Melvill on Ireland; a tract published by Kirby Lonsdale.

Commons, is Church or no Church."[1] It is uncertain whether Melvill influenced his friend's thought, but since there is evidence that they consulted one another,[2] it is interesting to note the soldier's statement thus expounded by Melvill: "We call upon you to view the struggle in its true light. It is not to be regarded as a struggle between rival Churches . . . It is not a contest for the possession of tithe, for right to the mitre, for claim on the benefice. It is a contest between the Christianity of the New Testament, and the Christianity of human tradition and corrupt fable."[3]

In short, Melvill as a Protestant reformer brought out into the open and vigorously defended the real issues of the controversy. "We are not," he said, "contending for non-essentials, for wearing surplices, or kneeling at the communion; we contend for the heart, the soul, the substance of Christianity. . . for that glorious high road, in which way-faring men though fools, shall not err; for unadulterated fountains of truth; for the bread of life; for the water of salvation--and contending for these, perish that false charity which would hush up the differences between Popery and Protestantism."[4]

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1 J. Morley, The Life of William Ewart Gladstone, Vol.I,p.155.

2 Vide Chapter II, p. 46.

3 Melvill, Sermons, New Edition, 1872, p. 106.

4 Melvill, Miscellaneous Sermons, Vol. II, p. 541.

A. M. Fairbairn points out that Newman's one-sided hatred of Liberalism led him to "evoke an ancient ecclesiastical ideal to answer and withstand it. . . The ghost of a Medieval Church was evoked to exorcise the resurgent spirit of Christ in men. . ."[1] Melvill's hatred of so-called Liberatism was equally intense, but his opinion of Romanism prevented his following those who left the Church of England for the ideal they hoped to find in the Church of Rome. Opposing both Liberalism and Romanism, he strenuously declared that real Protestantism was to be found in the apostolic Church which at the Reformation was cleansed of those doctrines and practices which had debased, corrupted and mutilated what was originally a pure apostolic church.

It is impossible to estimate how much Melvill may have influenced the thought of clergy and laymen of his times by boldly steering a middle course through a period that was flanked by perils on both the right and the left. "God has given us," he said, "our duties and privileges as members of an apostolic Church; and therefore shall a host--martyrs, confessors, and writers--rise up in judgment and condemn us, if we either submit our necks to popery, or run riot in the waste of latitudinarianism."[2]

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1 A.M. Fairbairn, Catholicism: Roman and Anglican, p. 82.

2 W. Sherlock, Religious Assemblies, Editor's preface by H. Melvill, p. XX.

Section III

Social Reformer

When Dr. John A. Mackay pleads for Christianity to come down out of the balcony and get on to the road, what he means is that the Light of God must be "beamed" into the life of men. Darkness shrouded much of life in Melvill's time; though his primary purpose was to dispel spiritual darkness, he also tried to relieve the gloom that hung so heavily over the social life of the world. We see his influence as a social reformer by studying in particular his preaching on behalf of societies and charities.

The Church Magazine for 1840 reveals that "Much of Mr. Melvill's time and strength is devoted to pleading the cause of public charities of the metropolis and its neighbourhood; and there are few which have not claimed his eloquent advocacy."[1] A survey of his published sermons supplies an imposing list of the causes which he supported.[2]

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[1] Vol. II, No. 14 for February, 1840

[2] Society for the Conversion of the Jews; Society for the Propagation of the Gospel in Foreign Parts; The Incorporated Society for Promoting the Enlargement, Building, and Repairing of Churches and Chapels throughout England and Wales; Newfoundland and British North America School Society; Stranger's Friend Society; District Visiting Society; Ladies Negro Education Society; St. Ann's Society School; Parochial Infant and National Schools; King's College Hospital; Royal Infirmary for Children; London Fever Hospital; Parochial Schools; Trinity House; Episcopal Floating Church; Samaritan Society; are a few specifically named which indicate the diversity of his interest.

One indication of his effectiveness in pleading for attention and financial support is the frequency with which he was called upon. Sir Monier Monier-Williams, who later became a colleague of Melvill's at Haileybury, recalled that as a boy, "I went to hear him deliver a sermon for some charitable object in the centre of London. . . I had to be at the church more than an hour before the time, and even then a crowd had gathered at the door."[1] One of his impressions of the sermon which he heard furnishes another clue to the secret of Melvill's success; "Henry Melvill, while almost overwhelming his hearers with torrents of his words, appeared to be so thrilled through and through with the ardour of his own enthusiasm, that all who listened to him could scarcely fail to feel their hearts stirred with sympathetic thrills of emotion."[2]

Of the social problems he dealt with in his sermons we take first, poverty, quoting from a sermon on behalf of the Stranger's Friend Society: "Take the case of a certain family; you would scarcely think that so much misery could meet under one roof. At not great distance from this church a father and mother with five children were found; the father had been long out of employment in consequence of the death of the person for whom he had worked, and something very near starvation was pressing on the group; and you shall hear the condition of the children; the eldest boy

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1 Memorials of Old Haileybury College, p. 153.

2 Ibid., p. 154.

was severely afflicted with abscess behind the ear; the next, a girl, was quite blind--the third, has met with an accident and broken its back--the fourth was so emaciated through want of food as to be lying at the point of death--the fifth, lately come from the country, was totally blind, though her sight has since been partially restored. There! men and women, beings with hearts! what say you to such accumulated wretchedness? There! sentimentalists, who can weep over a novel and be half distracted by the woes of some heroine in affliction! There you have mighty giant-like distress. . . If the worn and emaciated things come not during the life to haunt and harrass the conscience of the uncharitable man, beyond doubt they will arise at the judgment and give witness against him who cared nothing for their misery."[1] The congregation which heard his appeal that day cared enough to give "upwards of £-140."[2]

A second social problem for which he sought funds was that of the temptations which assailed the lonely in a city like London; this graphic appeal is taken from a sermon which he preached for the Samaritan Society: "I see," he said, "descending the steps of the hospital a young woman who is pronounced convalescent. She came from the country but a few months ago, obtained a place, but lost it through sickness. And now she is utterly at a loss what to do: she has no one to advise her, no one to receive her. She must

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[1] Melvill, Miscellaneous Sermons, Vol. II, p. 664.

[2] Ibid., Editor's note.

wander about in hopes of hearing of some employment, or of finding some friend. Alas, alas, there are villains, fiends, in this overgrown and desolate city; she will probably be watched by some artful seducer; she will be entangled in the meshes of the basest of wretches, at once the scourge and disgrace of mankind, who prowl the streets in search of fresh prey; and she, who is still innocent, and who, if guarded in this her hour of loneliness, would persevere in virtue, falls into the snare, becomes guilty and wretched, and requites society for its neglect by ruining a hundred others. And is this to be? not so: we have drawn a false picture; there is not one in this assembly who does not exclaim that this shall not be: the wanderer is preserved, the seducer is baffled; she of whom we speak, retains her innocence, and with it her happiness--and all because you nobly resolved that an institution should not want support, which sets itself humbly to copy the dealings of the Almighty, who 'stayeth his rough wind in the day of the east wind."[1]

One more illustration will serve to indicate that Melvill was not blind to social ills of his time: his voice did not echo the cry that England should be the workshop of the world. He said that avarice had borrowed something of the imagery of the poet and all nations were represented as crowding to England's shores eager to exchange the fruits of their lands for what Englishmen could dig from their mines

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[1] "The East Wind and the Rough Wind," a sermon preached at the Church of St. Philip, Stepney, February 23, 1839, in behalf of The Samaritan Society.

and throw off from their looms. "We left out from our showy calculation, that bone and muscle belong to other people, as well as to us; that industry and ingenuity, however they may distinguish the English, are not monopolized by them; that in manufacturing for the world, we might perhaps teach the world to manufacture for itself; and that it was at least possible, that if other countries saw us driving so advantageous a trade, they might think of their own resources, and attempt competition."[1] He saw in England's economic philosophy a fearful evil for which no amount of property could atone. "The evil," he warns, "is that human beings have to be more and more crowded together, and more and more tasked. Wages have to be cut down, and the very infants of our population forced into unhealthy employments, in order to afford us any chance of maintaining commercial ascendancy: an ascendancy, which even if maintained, is liable to fearful shocks from overproduction and glutted markets, and which is purchased at immeasurably too dear a cost, if purchased by the emaciated limbs and neglected souls of the labouring classes."[2]

Further illustrations may be given to show how the lash of his indignation bit deep into such social injustices as "ministering" to the diseased mind of the insane only with the whip and the chain in order to save the community from danger; - or allowing a fever patient with "death-thirst

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[1] Melvill, Miscellaneous Sermons, Vol. II, p. 925

[2] Ibid.,

upon him; delirium begun, and the wild wandering eye showing the mind to be unhinged. . ." to die because there was no room for him in the fever hospital. Again, on behalf of a "river population. . . the most useful, and well nigh the most neglected of our conntrymen," Melvill preached for "the anchor of the soul" (Heb.6:19) to be supplied through the ministry of the Episcopal Floating Church.

In the book, Popular Preachers of Our Time, Joseph Jonnson accurately concludes, "Melvill conceives it to be the duty of Christ's minister to direct his flock to live that life which shall lead to the life to come; but he deems it also his duty to direct his hearers in relation to social and secular duties."[1] In no sermon does he permit the charity for which he pleads to obscure the Christ. He felt certain that in Christ must be the roots if social action was to bear fruit. Melvill, we believe, succeeded in preaching a social gospel where the sermon was not social on one Sunday and Gospel the next. His own view expressed in a sermon on behalf of the Stranger's Friend Society indicates that such synthesis as we see in his sermons was no accident, "My business," he said, "on such occasions as tne present, is not merely to endeavour to persuade you to give money, but yet more to endeavour to persuade you to receive truth."[2]

We have intimated that the Christian's business is not the legislation of platitudes for and from the balcony,

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1 p. 193

2 Melvill, Miscellaneous Sermons, Vol. II, p. 657

but witness for truth born in struggles on the road; but as a reformer Melvill can hardly be accounted such a Christian pilgrim. Even though that voice which still speaks through the printed sermon, conveys the passion and fire he loosed on social problems, we cannot avoid the suspicion that Melvill's knowledge of the "road" was based on report more often than on pilgrimage.

Section IV

On Political Issues

"Mr. Melvill is not only a violent politician, but occasionally carries his politics into the pulpit"--so said James Grant in his 1839 Sketches of the Most Popular Preachers in London. "I have heard him deliver sermons in which there were passages of so ultra-political a character, that had a stranger been conducted blind folded into the place in which he was preaching, and it had been at a time when Parliament was sitting, he would have been in danger of mistaking the sermon of the reverent gentleman, for a speech of the Earl of Winchelsea in the Lords, or of Sir Robert Inglis in the Commons."[1]

Melvill's most pointed allusions to political issues are to be found in his Camberwell sermons, preached during that period when the ties were being loosened which bound Church and State together. In a prefatory note to a sermon published at the request of his congregation in 1835, Melvill

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[1] Op. cit., p. 15

writes, "I trust that the few political allusions which it contains will not be considered out of place in a sermon. In ordinary cases, I would object as much as any man to the introduction of politics into the pulpit. But there may be times--and the present seems of this character--when the questions agitated by legislators have a direct bearing on the progress or permanence of National Christianity. Such questions, if discussed in the Senate, may lawfully be referred to in the Church; the clergymen should consider them with care, and then pronounce opinions on them with fearlessness."[1]

What were the political questions which Melvill felt worthy of mention in the pulpit? The first was that of civil liberty. He said, in what is unquestionably a too sweeping statement, "Liberty, the theme of every factious demagogue, the watch-word of every traitor--liberty, the very name of which the honest and well disposed tremble to hear, is interpreted as meaning freedom to do wrong, the getting rid of every wholesome restraint, emancipation from all control, the being left to pursue our own ends by our own means."[2] Melvill's handling of this delicate question of freedom presupposes the inexorable principle laid down by Jesus that only as man knows the truth will he be free.[3] Melvill believed it to be an indication of

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1 "The Divine Patience exhausted through the making void the Divine Law," a sermon preached at Camden Chapel, April 26,1925.

2 Melvill, Miscellaneous Sermons, Vol. I, p. 149

3 John 8:32

sheer ignorance that a man should speak of true liberty apart from true religion; the two are indissolubly connected. In throwing off the restraints of religion for the purpose of securing freedom, an individual or a nation loses the very thing which it thought to gain. "The nearer we become to a nation of skeptics, the nearer we shall come to a nation of slaves."[1]

It is interesting to recall that at the time when Melvill was formulating and expressing his views on civil liberty, Karl Marx was working in the British Museum on somewhat the same problem. Today Melvill's thought on the subject can be seen to have prophetic relevance to the modern application of the strategy developed by Marx. The truth of such a statement as the following is tragically obvious: "For my own part, I am not afraid of declaring, that in all the revolutions whose object it is pretty plain, is to obtain political power, there is a direct tendency to the promotion of irreligion. . .The doctrine on which such revolutions ordinarily proceed, is the doctrine that all power is from the people. This, we say, is of itself an infidel doctrine. The doctrine of the Bible is, that all power is from above: and the infidel doctrine is, that all power is from beneath: and if the infidel doctrine be one which puts contempt on revelation,

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[1] Melvill, Miscellaneous Sermons, Vol. I, p. 154.

there is nothing to be suspected, but that, the more it is acted upon, the more will a disregard for Christianity prevail."[1] Events of 1949 have underlined the insight in Melvill's warning voiced in 1835, "The man that will not submit to his Maker will be averse to submission to his fellow-men; and, therefore, amongst the first to attempt subverting other systems of government."[2]

Melvill did not believe it to be the business of Christianity to prescribe directly any form of civil government, attempt any remodeling of national institutions, or correct what is faulty in government; but he affirms, "in proportion as Christianity gains a footing in a land it will silently though surely work out that result."[3] Melvill considered the problem of civil liberty primarily theological. "It is idle to talk of liberty while men are the servants of sin." No law can make a man free, who is his own slave; hence only as men are delivered from the tyranny of corrupt nature do they become more and more independent of external control. Reasoning thus, Melvill concluded that "civil liberty may be said to increase with moral liberty."[4]

Political fumbling provided another occasion for Melvill to bring politics into his preaching. In the midst

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1 Ibid.

2 Ibid., p. 153.

3 Ibid., p. 155.

4 Ibid.,

of the depression of 1842, men were starving while politicians haggled over the cause of their misery and the procedure for making relief available. Melvill indignantly told his congregation that "while a Board of Commissioners are considering how it happens that markets are overstocked. . .the preacher's business is simply to ask relief for this misery."[1] In the same sermon he speaks his mind on the Corn Laws, which he considered connected with the plight of the starving victims of unemployment. "Why, as a clergyman," he asks, "would I shrink from seeing in this country the abolition of all Corn Laws? Because I am a political partisan? God forbid that a clergyman should ever be such. Because I wish to uphold the interests of one particular class? God forbid that a clergyman should ever thus identify himself with any class. But I cannot hide from myself that whatever tended still more to drain the people from the fields and crowd them into the factories, whatever went to encouraging the plan of making England the work-shop for the world, would but increase the difficulty of getting any moral hold on a swarming population. . .Parties may jostle for place; but the measures which a Christian should oppose, are those which, whatever their apparent political expediency, menace injury to the national piety."[2]

An anonymous parishioner of Melvill's at Camberwell

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[1] Melvill; Miscellaneous Sermons, Vol. II, pp. 924-925.

[2] Ibid., p. 926

published a letter on what he called the "Political Sermon" preached by Melvill on March 8, 1835. He criticized Melvill for making no exceptions to his assertion that freedom is the watch-word of every traitor and the theme of every factious demagogue; and rightly pointed out that Melvill's position seemed to leave no justification for free expression and attempts to correct evils that exist within the National Church. He refers specifically to a system which allows for the "public treasury to be squandered" in giving pensions to men connected with the Church merely for the sake of supporting their "dignity." When Melvill says, ". . .infidelity and anarchy go hand in hand," his critic replies: "The sober-minded and religious people of England know that the abuses they complain against are not sanctioned by Christianity: they know that a clergy living in luxury upon the fruits of the toil of an impoverished people, is not authorized by Scripture."[1] His tacit inference is that Melvill is one of those who ought to be "the ministers of peace and good will, but are becoming partisans and the sowers of discord," and concludes his letter by saying, "It is well, therefore, that you appear in print, and so subject yourself to a 'strict review;' and the pernicious influence of your oral discourses may thereby be corrected."[2]

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1 A Letter to the Rev. H. Melvill, M.A., on the Political Sermon Preached by him at Camden Chapel, 8th of March, 1835 --by a Parishioner, p. 7.

2 Ibid., pp. 13-14.

Such a criticism of Melvill's reference to the political issues raised by the question of establishment might well be expected, for one who lives in a glass house and throws stones must expect a few panes to be broken in reply.

Summarizing Melvill's impact upon the ecclesiastical, social, and political scene of his day we conclude that in his alert, thoughtful approach to the ills which need the Christian remedy, he spoke fearlessly and directly. His thought ploughed deep, and his protest rang clear. He saw that Christianity enabled men to "take comprehensive views and therefore take comprehensive measures;"[1] but in estimating Melvill's influence, it may be said that though he did not fail in relating the Gospel to the needs of his time, he was guilty of not saying often enough what he said on occasion.

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[1] Melvill, Miscellaneous Sermons, Vol. I, p. 152.

CHAPTER VI

CONCLUSION

From this study of Henry Melvill's theological thought and homiletical method, has emerged one impression overshadowing all others: Melvill was primarily a preacher--almost to the exclusion of all other offices of the Christian ministry. In preaching he combined the highest religious enthusiasm with the real religious sanity, and the result was a popular preaching ministry.

While still a young man, Melvill made this keen observation: "I know that there is such a thing as running after a preacher, and, at the same time, running away from God."[1] As an old man, undoubtedly reflecting upon his own ministry, he said, "There is a great deal which passes for attachment to Christian doctrine which is nothing else but attachment to a particular style of preaching; so that the cases are far from uncommon in which persons may be heard to say that they cannot listen with any profit except to this or that minister. Thus, according to their own account, their religion is virtually dependent on a particular instrument, rather than on the Spirit of God which gives to every instrument all its efficiency."[2]

We suspect that Melvill loathed drawing people to him simply because he was a master of the art of preaching. His seems to have been one of those ministries touched

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[1] Melvill, Miscellaneous Sermons, Vol. I, p.493.

[2] Melvill's Sermons: Latter Years, Vol. I, p. 164.

by the tragedy of the transient glow. Passing years erased the surface marks of his ministry; its lasting impressions are visible only to God, who knows of the countless souls led by it into ~~the~~ love for the Master. Divine wisdom has decreed of a ministry such as Melvill's that research must stop short of evaluating in any scientific way its influence on the soul of mankind. It is puzzling to ponder the enduring power of a popular ministry. Nevertheless, the question arises; Is Melvill remembered as he ought to be?

Booksellers say that what editions of his work survived until the 1930's were swallowed up in the waste paper drives of the 1940's. In other words, many sermons which today still might be appreciated as devotional readings or models of effective homiletical craftsmanship are lost, never to be recovered. Unfortunate though this may be, the far greater loss occurred in 1871 when the projecting power and kindling ardour of the preacher were no more. Melvill's imprint on the sands of time vanished soon after his death. Two reasons may explain this fact: first, his sermons, eloquent though they are even in cold print, lack that admirable terseness which attracts and sustains attention. Secondly, some knowledge of the preacher's personality is essential for the full appreciation of his message, and since the character of Melvill was too soon forgotten, so too were the fruits of his preaching ministry.

Little remains to be said of Melvill's literary style except that it served him well; more can and should be said of the transforming power which his message exercised in and through his personality. Out of the pulpit, Melvill was quiet, reserved and we suspect might have been judged colourless; but when preaching, his personality was so submerged in the personality whose love he proclaimed, that his hearers often lost sight of this man before them who was so consumed by his message. In him was seen the glow and power of the prophets; for he was a man to whom truth was inexpressibly great and life challengingly real; he was a man whose heart burned with the urgency of one who directs Truth into the individual and corporate life of his fellows. Every generation produces a few outstanding examples of this type of preacher, and every generation needs to be relentlessly reminded that only in so far as its religious leaders are men consumed by Christ's Gospel and transformed by its power, will His Church become saturated by the Spirit. In Melvill, we believe, are to be found those qualities which make for an inspiring and an inspired ministry, and for this reason alone, he should not be forgotten.

Man's taste for evangelical Christianity is seldom strong, and antipathy to its champions is often based on their intellectual timidity or lack of respectability. Melvill should be remembered as one whose intellectual

powers, even during his early days at Cambridge, had been proved to be far from flimsy. Furthermore, it is manifest that in his subsequent ministry he capably dispelled the notion that evangelical religion is fit only for the moron or the fanatical emotionalist. It has been said that he had the power of confirming the faith of many persons because of the trust which they placed, not only in his sincerity, but in his sheer power of intellect.

Reading Melvill's sermons now and picturing the persons who made up his congregations, one is reminded of the comment Principal Rainy once made after speaking enthusiastically about the sermons of some scholarly preacher. When asked, "Will the simple people to whom he preaches follow him at all?", he replied, "Oh well, they will have the comfortable feeling that something very fine is going on."[1] If the less intelligent folk in Melvill's congregation felt that something fine was going on, the more intelligent surely knew that what they heard was the product of a mind which had embraced the rigorous discipline demanded of a mathematician. If the voice of the evangelical minister is ever to be heard and heeded by people who demand of religion more than froth, then the sloppy thinking, too often characteristic of sincere heralds of God, must be replaced by the kind of disciplined logic to be seen in Melvill's sermons.

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[1] A. S. Gossip, op. cit., p. 212.

Still another reason for remembering Melvill is that his was a ministry faithful to the Word of God. He was at home in the Bible and always at his best when expounding its truths. His study of the Scriptures was thorough and ardent, and once conclusions were reached they became inextricably imbedded in his spirit. He searched the whole of the Scriptures with the conviction that they were the 'bearer of the breath of God.' His was primarily a ministry of listening followed by a ministry of speaking--and then only of those things which he had heard and which were ratified by his own experience. To-day few men of God have either the opportunity or the desire to indulge in the disciplined luxury of reflection and study in the extreme measure upon which Melvill insisted. His preaching ministry suffered greatly as a result of his neglect of the office of pastor, yet his formula of listening before speaking is right; if the clergy in greater and ever increasing numbers were to employ it, far less of our human frailty would be glutting the homiletical market and more of God's redeeming grace would be available to souls hungry for the Bread of Life.

There is in Boston a monument to Phillips Brooks which represants him standing in his pulpit with right hand uplifted toward heaven and left hand pointing to the open Bible; behind him the Christ is standing, in the same pulpit, his hand resting upon his servant's shoulder. Such would be a fitting memorial to Melvill.

This study had intensified the conviction in which it was begun--that there is a desperate need for the evangelical ministry to make itself heard above the babble of secular voices. One hundred years have solved some problems, altered others, and created new ones--but the basic problem of what to preach and how to preach it effectively remains essentially the same. Within the context of his deep commitment to the Gospel, Melvill constantly pointed to Him who is the Gospel, exalting him as the sole Hope and Redeemer who mediates the lifting love of God to fallen man.

> "Let me once more see whether the foolishness of a proclamation may not bring you to His feet. I am not arguing with you: I decline all debate: I do not stand here to prove anything to you--call me illogical if you will; say that I give you nothing but rhapsody and declamation: but nevertheless hearken to me as to a mere herald, and carry away with you the proclamation which I am commissioned to utter--my first proclamation is, 'The wrath of God is revealed from Heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men'--it should make you tremble; but my second proclamation should fill you with hope, 'God hath made Him to be sin for us who knew no sin, that we might be made the righteousness of God in Him.'"
>
> --Henry Melvill on "The Foolishness of Preaching."

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them not; for of such is the kingdom of God," he says, "It might be inferring, perhaps, more than the incident will warrant, were we to argue the lawfulness of infant baptism from our Lord's conduct on the occasion in question."[1] He makes no attempt to justify the legality of infant baptism, but he does argue that the disciples' motives are still familiar: if the child is diseased, deformed, or blind, bring him to Jesus, by all means; but if he is in good health, what advantage will he derive from contact with Christ? If the child has the capacity for some response of faith, let him receive the benefits of Christ's ministry, but until then why bother the Master? If the infant is too young to be instructed in the Christian doctrines; how can he be fit to participate in a Christian Sacrament? The question then is: should they be brought, or should the sacrament be deferred until they can come of their own free will? God expressly commanded, affirms Melvill, that the rite of circumcision be administered to infants, implying that "infancy of itself was no disqualification for a religious privilege."[2] "Remember," he says, "that in theology, for the most part, what is mystery to the child is a mystery also to a man."[3] In these passages his approach is more mellow, but in a sermon preached a few

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[1] Ibid., p. 93.

[2] Ibid., p. 94.

[3] Ibid., p. 95.

the faithful discharge of the ministerial office, I am equally bound to warn the hearer of sermons and the receiver of sacraments, that there may be in him nothing of 'the root of the matter,'--that he may remain unconverted through the Word which he hears not being 'mixed with faith,' and eat and drink his own condemnation, through 'not discerning the body of the Lord'."[1] Melvill spares no feelings in making it unmistakably clear that man's presence at the feast unless fortified by preparation will avail him little; in fact, we see in one of the last sermons he preached this conviction considerably amplified. His topic was "New Wine in Old Bottles." Dismissing in his analogy what might be considered a scrambled metaphor, he makes this point: "If that which is good in itself be deposited in that which is not fitted to hold it, the result will be the loss of the wine through fracture of the bottle. Let this be considered by all who are in the habit of receiving Holy Communion. Come not unpreparedly to that sacred ordinance. Take not of the new wine, mysteriously significative, without endeavouring first to cleanse out the vessel. In the words of the exhortation of the Church, 'Repent you of your sins, or else come not to that holy table.' We shall be the worse for partaking, if we partake in impenitence and indifference--the new wine in the old

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[1] Melvill, Miscellaneous Sermons, Vol. II, p. 881.

History has clearly proved that the liturgical service which Melvill read can be beautifully used or sadly abused. We know what he loathed was form without fire. What he once said in another connection, we believe might also be relevant to his thought on the form of worship: "Take away life from religion, leave us nothing but formality, and there is not upon the face of the earth an individual, so useless to others and to himself, as the one in whom the love remains, but remains in its ashes and not in its fires."[1]

Melvill believed praise to be the best auxiliary to prayer,[2] and together they constitute essential aids in the worship of God. "When many voices join heartily in prayer, it is hardly possible to remain undevout; when many voices join heartily in praise, it is hardly possible to remain indifferent."[3] Melvill might well laud the truth of this, and at the same time lament the lack of application. About the time Melvill was deciding to leave Cambridge for Camberwell, a writer in the British Critic complains that "with all the facilities for excellant psalmody--powerful organs, numerous congregations and often a multitude of charity children--some of the London churches

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[1] Melvill, Miscellaneous Sermons, Vol. II, p. 811.

[2] Melvill, Sermons on Less Prominent Facts, Vol. I, p. 101.

[3] Ibid., p. 100.